TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

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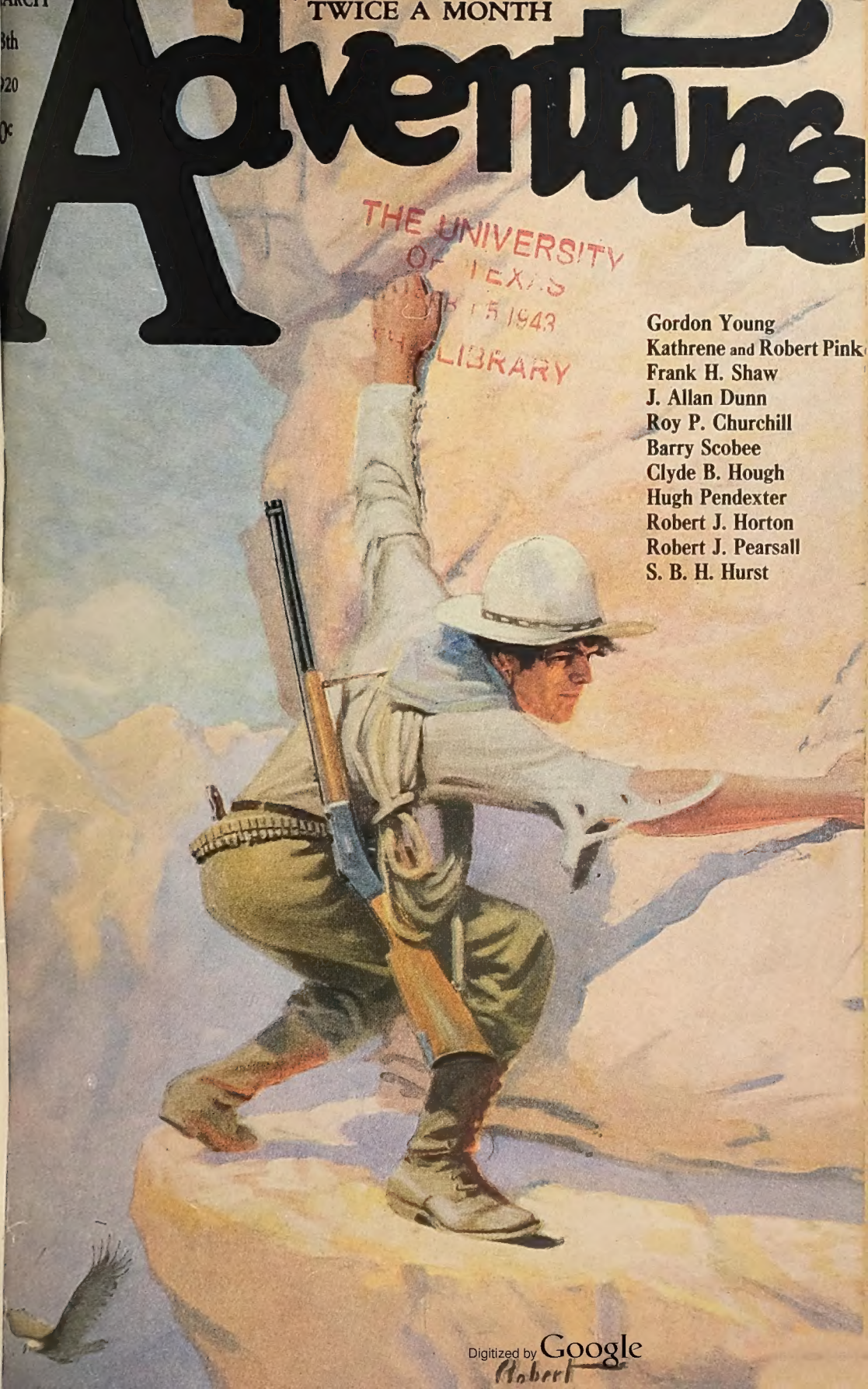

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Inside front cover

The Old Way

Factory

Branch House

Salesman

Agent

You

Two Ways of Selling the OLIVER Typewriter

The New Way

Factory

You

The New Way Saves You $43

THE OLD WAY: **It cost $43 to sell you a typewriter. Rents of offices in many cities, salaries, commissions and other costly practices—each demanded its share.**

THE NEW WAY: **We ship from the factory to you, eliminating all wastes. This saves the $43, and it now goes to you. A $100 Oliver costs you but $57. Why waste $43 by buying typewriters the old way?**

These Facts Will Save You Money

Note that this advertisement is signed by The Oliver Typewriter Company itself. It is not the advertisement of a concern offering second-hand or rebuilt Olivers of an earlier model. The Oliver Typewriter Company makes only new machines.

The old way, as explained above, was wasteful and wrong. So people have welcomed our new economical plan and our output has multiplied.

We offer for $57 the exact machine which formerly sold at $100. This is our Model Nine, the finest typewriter we ever built. It has the universal keyboard, so any stenographer may turn to it without the slightest hesitation and do better work more easily.

And it has dozens of superiorities not found elsewhere. For instance, it has far fewer parts. This means longer wear, and naturally few or no repairs.

This Oliver Nine is a 20-year development. If any typewriter is worth $100, it is this splendid model.

It is the same machine used by great concerns such as United States Steel Corporation, National City Bank of New York, Pennsylvania Railroad, Otis Elevator Company and hosts of others. Such concerns demand the best. Yet they are not wasteful.

FREE TRIAL

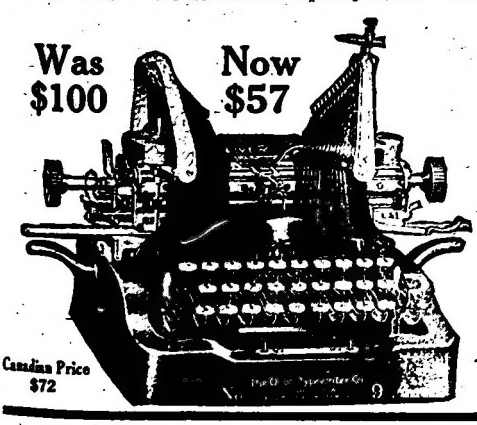
Merely clip the coupon below, asking us to send a free trial Oliver. We do not ask a penny down. When the Oliver arrives, try it out. Put it to every test. Compare its workmanship.

Then, when you are convinced that the Oliver Nine is all we claim, and you prefer it, pay us at the rate of $3 per month.

During the free trial, you are not under the slightest obligation to buy. If you wish to return it, we even refund the out-going transportation charges.

Used typewriters accepted in exchange at a fair valuation.

Or, if you would rather know more about our plans before ordering a free-trial Oliver, check the coupon for our amazing book entitled, "The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy." We accompany it with our beautifully illustrated catalog describing the Oliver Nine.



Mail Me This

The Oliver Typewriter Co.

733 Oliver Typewriter Building

Chicago, Ill. (20.03)

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY
733 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days' free inspection. If I keep it, I will pay $57 at the rate of $3 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is.....

This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation or Business.....

ADVENTURE March 18th, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance; single copy 20 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. 24 No. 6
Serial No. 150

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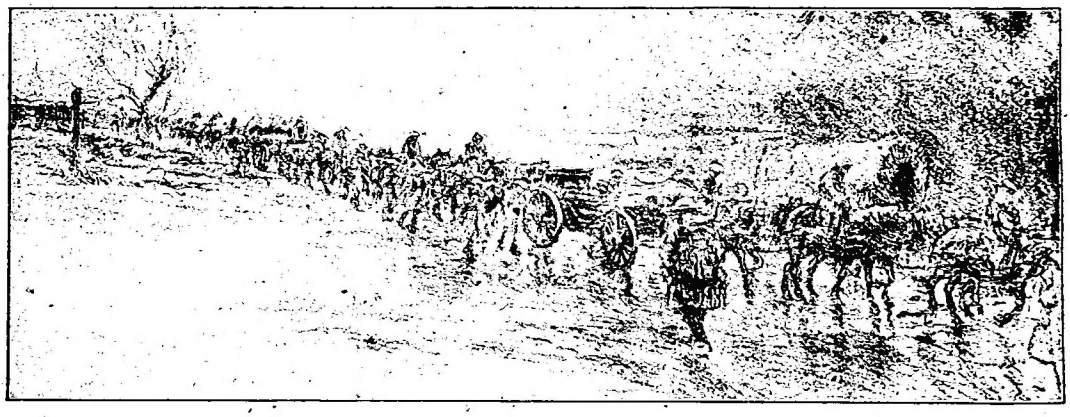

On the road to Flirey—

The creak and groan of wheels,
And batteries that rumble down the road
With pound and splash of hoofs and chains a-rattle,
The driver's spurring chirp,
The tugging as the mules take up the load
And 'bove it all, the roar of distant battle.

Will the gang that marched down that road ever break up?

Well, it's demobilized now. Its members are in long trousers and they sleep between sheets and eat from plates and do other conventional things. But in spirit they will always be

The Gang that marched
down the road to Flirey.

The gang is traveling other roads now—civilian roads where it doesn't rain all the time and the mud isn't ankle deep. It's an easier road than the road to Flirey—all the easier because the gang is reading

THE HOME SECTOR

A WEEKLY FOR THE NEW CIVILIAN

CONDUCTED BY THE FORMER EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF

The Stars and Stripes

15 cents a copy on all news-stands every Wednesday

Write for special introductory offer

The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York

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Brunswick

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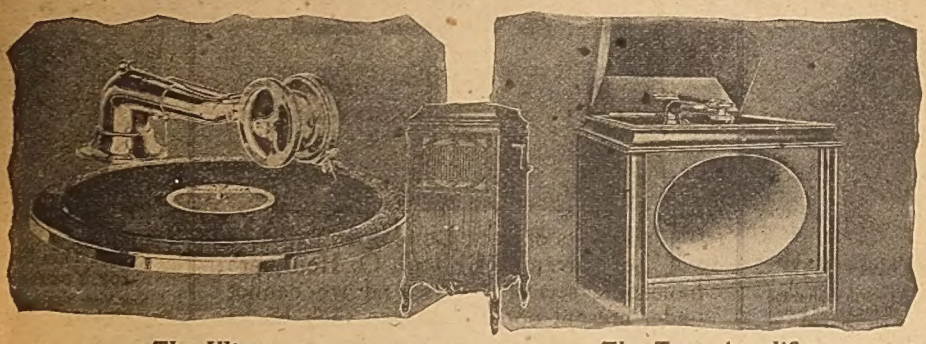

The Ultona *The Tone Amplifier*

Two Great Advancements in Phonographic Art

The nation-wide success of Brunswick Phonographs is due largely to the Ultona and the Brunswick Tone Amplifier—two features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

These came out at a time when betterments seemed impossible. The Ultona distinguished The Brunswick as an all-record phonograph—an idea now practically universal.

But no one can duplicate the Ultona, for it is a Brunswick patent. At the turn of a hand it presents to each make of record the proper diaphragm, the proper needle. It brings out tones hitherto lost. Each record is heard at its best.

The Brunswick Tone Amplifier brought better tone. It is made entirely of wood. We abandoned the old-time idea of a metal throat. Thus, by adopting the violin principle, tone waves are given proper acoustic staging.

Brunswick tone brings fullness, richness, clarity. We avoid harsh and strident notes.

There is only one way to fully appreciate The Brunswick. That is to hear it and then hear others. Your own ear will immediately appreciate Brunswick superiority. This is the unfailing test which has put thousands and thousands of Brunswicks in homes the nation over.

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER COMPANY

General Offices: 623-633 South Wabash Ave., Chicago

Branch Houses in Principal Cities of United States, Mexico and Canada
Canadian Distributors: Musical Merchandise Sales Co., 819 Yonge Street, Toronto

Now a Triumph in Records

The time has come after years of preparation when Brunswick Records are now on sale. Again we create new standards. We offer interpretations by noted directors. Thus we unite the talent of the artist with the genius of the composer. It brings the final link in authoritative renditions. Again, let us suggest that your own ear decide upon the merit of Brunswick Records.

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MARCH 20 LAST DAY
to get JACK LONDON
FREE

"A Thief—She?"

AND YET—with a shiver she told him all the sordid story! The stage life—the nights of drunkenness—the days of remorse for her sin—all was poured out in the desperate tale. But he loved her in spite of all, and—then came the astounding truth—the unexpected twist—that makes O. Henry the most eagerly read of American story tellers.

THE sets of Jack London which have been given FREE with O. Henry are handsome sets of books and we cannot under present conditions give such books away. We have the choice of discontinuing the offer or giving you flimsier books. We prefer to stop the offer.

Before doing so we wish to make this one announcement. As long as the present edition lasts you can get the O. Henry at its regular price and the Jack London FREE. This, however, is your last chance. Send the coupon without money at once and get your O. Henry for examination and Jack London FREE.

Finish this Story for Yourself

New York had seemed so wonderful—art had seemed so big—but New York turned a cold shoulder—art proved hard and bitter. Alone in the big city, at the end of her resources, she was too weary to cry. This special day she went out to seek—not glory or fame—but just for something to eat. She found—but let the story be told by O. HENRY

274 Short Stories **O. Henry** *One Long Novel*

Each and every story in the set of books is new and different—each with a new beginning—a new plot—a new ending—and so human—so full of fun—of pathos—of laughter—of tears.

He knows how we love rascals—as a mother loves a naughty child better than a good one.

He finds romance everywhere—in the department store—in the shop—in the gutter—in the street car. He laughs when he preaches, and preaches when he laughs. He sees what no one else sees—but he sees what we have all subconsciously seen and makes us wonder why we never thought of it before.

Only a Few Days Left

Tomorrow may be too late—*Today*—*Now* is your last chance to get a FREE SET of JACK LONDON. Don't miss it. Delay will cost you money. Don't be left out of this last chance offer. There are comparatively few sets left. There will be no next time. Your chance is here now—while you've got the coupon before you—send it—save money. DO IT NOW!

Send the Coupon Now

Get Jack London *free*—and join the millions who have wept and laughed and felt better for the reading of O. Henry's warm, kindly, joyous, tragic bits of life. Remember that the end of the sale is at hand. A day lost will cost you money. **Send the coupon now—today—at once.**

THE REVIEW OF REVIEWS CO.
30 Irving Place Publishers of the American Review of Reviews New York

Adv. 3-18-20

Review of Reviews
30 Irving Pl.
New York City

Send me on approval charges paid by you, O. Henry's works in 12 volumes, gold tops. Also the 5-volume set of London bound in cloth. If I keep the books I will remit $1.50 in 5 days and then $2.00 a month for 10 months for the O. Henry set only and retain the London set without charge. Otherwise I will, within ten days, return both sets at your expense.

Name .....
Address .....
Occupation .....

The special ¾ Keratol binding of O. Henry costs only a few cents more a volume and has proved a favorite. For this more luxurious binding change above to $1.00 in five days and then $3.00 a month for 9 months.

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

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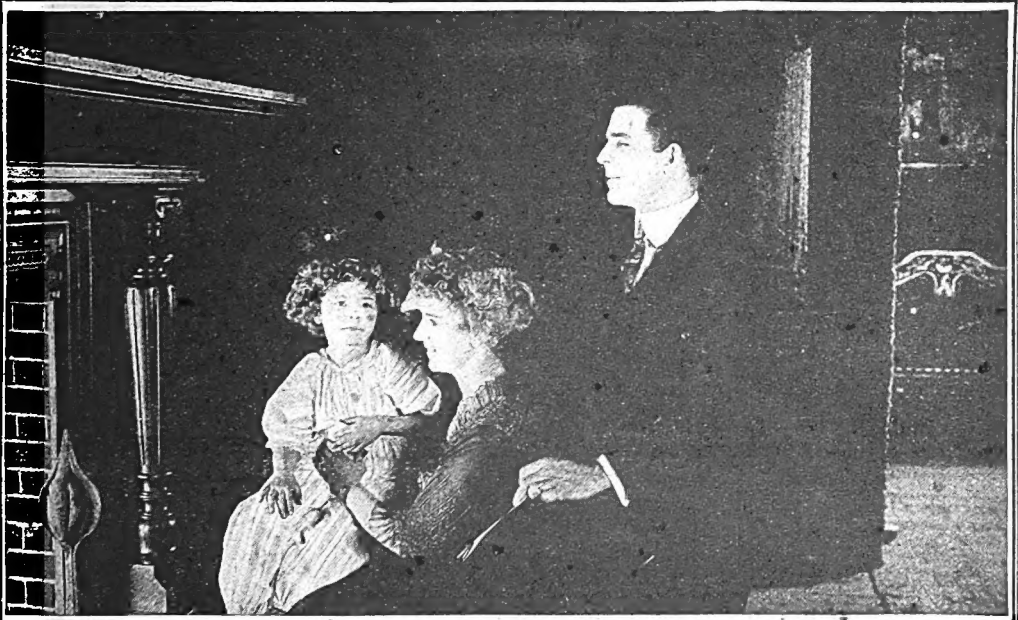

"The proudest moment of our lives had come!"

"We sat before the fireplace, Mary and I, with Betty perched on the arm of the big chair. It was our first evening in our own home! There were two glistening tears in Mary's eyes, yet a smile was on her lips. I knew what she was thinking.

"Five years before we had started bravely out together. The first month had taught us the old, old lesson that two cannot live as cheaply as one. I had left school in the grades to go to work and my all too thin pay envelope was a weekly reminder of my lack of training. In a year Betty came—three mouths to feed now. Meanwhile living costs were soaring. Only my salary and I were standing still.

"Then one night Mary came to me. 'Jim,' she said, 'Why don't you go to school again—right here at home? You can put in an hour or two after supper each night while I sew. Learn to do some one thing. You'll make good—I *know* you will.'

"Well, we talked it over and that very night I wrote to Scranton. A few days later I had taken up a course in the work I was in. It was surprising how rapidly the mysteries of our business became clear to me—took on a new fascination. In a little while an opening came. I was ready for it and was promoted—with an increase. Then I was advanced again. There was money enough to even lay a little aside. So it went.

"And now the fondest dream of all has come true. We have a real home of our own with the little comforts and luxuries Mary had always longed for, a little place, as she says, that 'Betty can be proud to grow up in.'

"I look back now in pity at those first blind stumbling years. Each evening after supper the doors of opportunity had swung wide and I had passed them by. How grateful I am that Mary helped me to see that night the golden hours that lay within."

In city, town and country all over America there are men with happy families and prosperous homes because they let the International Correspondence Schools come to them in the hours after supper and prepare them for bigger work at better pay. More than two million men and women in the last 28 years have advanced themselves through spare time study with the I. C. S. Over one hundred thousand right now are turning their evenings to profit. Hundreds are starting every day.

You, too, can have the position you want in the work you like best. You can have a salary that will give your family the kind of a home, the comforts, the little luxuries that you would like them to have. Yes, you can! No matter what your age, your occupation, or your means—you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it. That's fair, isn't it? Then mark and mail this coupon. There's no obligation and not a penny of cost. But it may be the most important step you ever took in your life.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

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Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

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☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER	☐ Cert. Public Accountant
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☐ Marine Engineer	☐ Railway Accountant
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☐ CHEMIST	☐ AGRICULTURE
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Present Occupation_____

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Canadians may send this coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada

7-25-19

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Stories

IN THIS magazine the story's the thing! Here you find the best work of famous writers—and of new writers whose stories are bound to make them famous.

By George Randolph Chester—a fantastic tale, "POUFF," of the Fates, the vengeance of a little bootblack and the end of the world.

By Mary Brecht Pulver—a shiftless mountaineer and his daughter, "FORTUNE'S FAVORITES," are left a fabulous sum. How fortune of one sort declines and another goes up—that's the story.

By Philip Curtiss—the first of the innocent-young-thing type of movie star, Toots Fleming, "THE FIRST OF THE CUTIES," gets her extravagant wishes in rather a startling way.

By Charles Saxby—a tense, weird, fast-moving story of Arabia, "BETRAYAL," involving white noons, silver moonlit nights and baffling mystery.

By Conrad Richter—how *Robert Murray*, in trying to run his father's farm on a "1921-model" plan, learns to be a great shoe salesman instead, is the absorbing story, "CABBAGES AND SHOES."

By Francis Willing Wharton—a small-town story of whispering gossip, a girl with a past and a man who gets at the real truth in his own compelling way. "A BYWAY OF DANBY," it's called.

By Roland F. Andrews—a new writer, "THE HONOR OF SAM BUTLER," in which the old fly-by-night swindler of that name tried to sell part of the American navy to a South American republic, is one hearty chuckle after another!

By Zona Gale—a new more-or-less hero, "ARPEGGIO," a small-town "feller" of little account who happens to be elected a town official. And maybe things don't move!

Besides two serials, "MARY WOLLASTON," by *Henry Kitchell Webster*, and "DICTATED—BUT NOT RED," by *Leavitt Ashley Knight*—"THE STORY OF HOOVER," by *Vernon Kellogg*—"PRIVATE GODS," by *Irving Bacheller*—"COLYUM CONDUCTOR," by *Ted Robinson*—THE THEATRE, by *Alexander Woollcott*.

All in this one number alone, the March

Everybody's Magazine

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

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I've Earned $2500.00

In the past six months by magazine-subscription work. It hasn't interfered with my regular business. In fact, my regular business improves because of it.

Signed HARVEY STOFFLET.

What Does YOUR Spare Time Pay You?

It can be worth as much to you as Stofflet's is to him. If you have a few hours a day, or an hour a week—time that is ordinarily wasted—convert it into ready money. How much time have you?

We want more men in Stofflet's class—men with spare time to look after the subscriptions for *Adventure*, *Everybody's Magazine* and *The Delineator*.

No matter what the size of your town, one hundred or one thousand people, if you have a spare hour—we need you.

Hundreds of *Adventure Magazine* representatives began work in their spare time. Without previous experience and without cost to them, they built up a profitable business. Why not you?

You do not invest a cent. We furnish everything and tell you how. Let's get together. Write us today.

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

Box 514, Spring and Macdougal Streets

NEW YORK, N. Y.

NO MONEY DOWN — 2 CREDIT ALL — $2 A MONTH

Elgin, Waltham, Howard, Illinois or any watch you want. Easy Payments and 30 days Free Trial. Send for Big

FREE CATALOG

112 pages wonderful values, diamonds, watches, rings, jewelry, up-to-date designs. Buy the **Ware Way**, you will never miss the money. Liberty Bonds accepted. ALFRED WARE CO., Dept. 138, St. Louis, Mo.

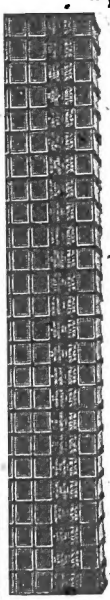
GET WELL—BE YOUNG—GROW TALL

This University discovery is the most important health invention of the century. It remakes and rejuvenates the Human Body. It produces normal spines. It frees impinged and irritated nerves, corrects contracted muscles, shortened ligaments, eliminates congestion, improves circulation and drainage of the body. **It will increase the body's length.**

THE PANDICULACTOR CO., 1524 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, O.

"You're Afraid"

"I *ain't* afraid." "I ain't."
"You are." "You are."



What would have happened next if you were a boy? A frightful mix-up! With the calm unreasonableness of youth these two boys fought without even knowing each other—just as you have fought many a time—because you couldn't help it. Once more go back to boyhood with

MARK TWAIN

***25 Volumes*—Novels—Boys' Stories—Humor — Essays — Travel — History**

Mark Twain is the spirit of undying youth—the spirit of real Americanism—for he who came out of that loafing—out-at-elbows—down-at-the-heels Mississippi town—he has passed on to the world the glory of our inspiring Americanism—the serious purpose that underlies our laughter—for to Mark Twain humor is only incidental—and he has made eternal the springs of its youth and enthusiasm.

Take Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer by the hand and go back to your own boyhood.

FREE Paine's Life of Mark Twain 4 Vols.

Not only does this coupon bring Mark Twain at the low price, but it **brings you absolutely FREE Albert Bigelow Paine's Life of Mark Twain.**

It happens that we have a few sets of the four-volume edition on hand—not enough to dispose of in the usual way—so until the edition is exhausted we will give you a complete set FREE with your set of Mark Twain.

There are only a few—this coupon brings you one—and never again will you have a chance to get one except at the full regular prices.

Low Price Sale Must Stop

Rising costs make it impossible to continue the sale of Mark Twain at a low price.

The last of the edition is in sight. There will never again be a set of Mark Twain at the present price. Now is your opportunity to save money. Send the coupon today.

HARPER & BROTHERS

Est. 1817 **Franklin Square, N. Y.**

Cut out this coupon and mail it today

Harper & Brothers, 32 Franklin Square, New York.

Send me, all charges prepaid, a set of Mark Twain's works in 25 volumes, illustrated, bound in handsome green cloth, stamped in gold with trimmed edges, and Paine's Life of Mark Twain, in 4 volumes, bound to match, FREE. If not satisfactory I will return them at your expense; otherwise I will send you $2.50 within 5 days, and $3.00 a month for 14 months. For cash deduct 8% from remittance.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

OCCUPATION.....

To get the black, half-leather binding, change terms to $6.00 within 5 days, and $6.00 a month for 13 months.

Adv. 3-18-20

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Knowing How Wins on Pay Day

KNOWING HOW is the thing that puts the big pay in the pay-envelope. It's the thing that lifts men out of a poor-paying job into a man's size job with a man's size pay. *The man with the "know how" under his hat always wins out.* No matter what kind of work you are doing, or what you expect to do—you can learn more about that work and get more money for doing it. You don't have to go to school. Neither do you take any special training. One of these home study courses in book form gives you all the "know how" you need.

Some of the world's greatest experts prepared these books just to help ambitious men get ahead. They are written in plain, good old U. S. language that anyone can understand. No puzzling technical terms. Everything is explained. Thousands of pictures, plans, blueprints, diagrams, etc., in each set. Over 100,000 sets have been sold. Pick out a set in line with your ambition and send the FREE TRIAL coupon that brings the books without your sending any money in advance.

Pay-Raising BOOKS

Select From This List for Free Use in Your Own Home

Automobile Engineering, 6 vol., 2600 pages, 2100 pictures. Was $30.00. Now 21.80

Carpentry and Contracting, 5 volumes, 2138 pages, 1000 pictures. Was $25.00.....Now $19.80

Civil Engineering, 9 vol., 3900 pages. 3000 pictures. Was $45.00.....Now 29.80

Fire Prevention and Insurance, 4 volumes, 1500 pages, 600 pictures. Was $20.00.....Now 15.80

Electrical Engineering, 8 vol., 3800 pages, 3000 pictures. Was $40.00. Now 24.80

Machine Shop Practice, 6 vol., 2300 pages, 2500 pictures. Was $30.00. Now 19.80

Steam and Gas Engineering, 7 volumes, 3300 pages, 2500 pictures. Was $35.00.....Now 21.80

Law and Practice (with reading course), 13 volumes, 6000 pages, illustrated. Was $72.00.....Now 44.80

Telephony and Telegraphy, 4 volumes, 1728 pages, 2000 pictures. Was $20.00.....Now 14.80

Sanitation, Heating and Ventilating, 4 volumes, 1454 pages, 1400 pictures. Was $20.00.....Now 14.80

Practical Accounting, 4 volumes, 1840 pages, 800 pictures, etc. Was $20.00.....Now 14.80

Drawing, 4 vol., 1578 pages, 1000 pictures, blueprints, etc. Was $20.00.....Now 14.80

Accountancy and Business Management, 7 volumes, 3000 pages, 2000 pictures. Was $35.00.....Now 24.80

SPECIAL With each set of these books goes a one-year membership in our society. This entitles you to consult our engineers and experts on any subject connected with your work FREE. This membership usually sells for $12.00.

This picture shows the Automobile Engineering Books, five volumes closed and one open. The bindings will last a lifetime.

FREE Examination!

Don't send one penny. Just fill out the coupon and mail it. This will bring any set you select (the whole set, not a sample) by express collect. The books will be yours to use as you please for an entire week. You be the judge and decide whether or not they will do for you what they have done for thousands of other men. If you don't think they will help you, send them back at our expense and you won't owe a cent.

50 Cents a Week

Pay only $2.80 within 1 week. If you keep the books and send us $2 each month (for Law, $3) until the special reduced price is paid. This amounts to about 7c a day. Mail coupon NOW. You'll be mighty glad you did when pay day comes 'round.

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY, Dept. X-103, Chicago

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY, Dept. X-103, Chicago, U. S. A.

Please send me set of..... for 7 DAYS' examination, shipping charges collect. I will examine the books thoroughly and, if satisfied, will send $2.80 within 7 days and $2.00 each month (Law $3.00) until I have paid the special price of $..... If I decide not to keep the books, I will return them within a week at your expense.

Name .....

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Reference.....

Please fill out all lines.

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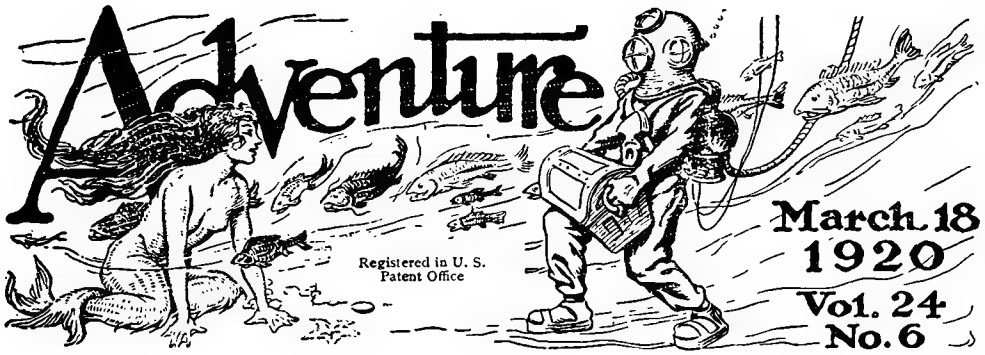

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $3.00 in advance — **Single Copy, Twenty Cents**

Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 60 cents.

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for Mid-March, 1920, Issue

The Pa-Adventure of a Prophet *A Complete Novelette* . . **S. B. H. Hurst** 3

Coomer Ali wants to stay in the Calcutta jail, but the nasty superintendent *sahib* won't let him. *Coomer Ali* is a "prophet" who has been found out. Jail is safe; outside are innumerable disillusioned Mohammedans whose vengeance he fears. So *Coomer Ali* takes to sea and the climax comes when the cyclone breaks.

Heart of the Yankee . . . . . **Barry Scobee** 26

Always in southwest Texas is there a feud between the herdsman and the nomad—between the landowner and the landless. When the nomad bounty-hunter, *Pooley*, files on land occupied by the rancher, *Nathan North*, the bullets begin to fly. *North* risks his life to protect his property; nevertheless his Mexican guest considers him chicken-hearted.

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"*CHUCK" WARNER* is the biggest liar on earth. But when he poses as the lost heir to $10,000,000, even with the able assistance of *Ike Harper* and *"Magpie" Simpkins*, he has his work cut out for him. "Assisting Ananias," a story by W. C. Tuttle appearing in the First April *Adventure.*

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Adventure
March 18
1920
Vol. 24
No. 6

The Pa-Adventure of a Prophet

A Complete Novelette

By S. B. H. Hurst

Author of "Erased," "The Second Fall," etc.

COOMER ALI had been a prophet, but, running true to form, he found himself without honor. He also found himself in jail; but contrary to custom he was very glad so to find himself. Yet the job of sweeper—which had been given to him by a humorous official—offered little scope for those peculiar emotional needs which cause people to be prophets.

He found it impossible to work himself into a frenzy over the wrongs of a broom; and while he did curse it with sufficiency, its interest in its hereafter was not enough to make it a follower. Burning when it became useless being its natural lot, Ali's hot remarks concerning it had no effect whatever.

It was the most profitless situation in which ever prophet found himself—but he dared not change it. To be free, he had but to ask to be let out; but back of his mind lurked the memory of certain promises made by his deluded followers when he was a prophet, which made the jail a safe place.

However, thirty days was the limit of his sentence. Would the *burra sahib* in charge of the jail allow the unfortunate prophet to remain after the sentence expired?

This question began to haunt the dreams of Coomer Ali, and he saw himself thrown out to the severe beatings of men to whom his word had once been law. And not only to these, but also to the blows of many Hindus—Ali was a Mohammedan—to whom he had brought unhappiness.

Thus it came about that a trembling sweeper, who had once been a prophet, presented himself to the jail superintendent one warm, Calcutta morning, about a question of privilege. Would the protector of poor prophets allow his servant to remain in this honorable and quite charming jail after the sentence of thirty days expired?

The superintendent had known Ali for some years, because like all prophets Ali had made a nuisance of himself and caused the authorities all sorts of trouble. He also knew that Ali was the offspring of a fairly decent dingey *waller*—who was still plying his trade upon the muddy Hugli—and that he had nothing at all to fear from the threats of which he was so sorely afraid. For another religious excitement had swept the city, and Coomer Ali and all his works

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had been long forgotten—long, that is, to the native mind.

Therefore the superintendent—who did not love prophets—scowled mightily.

"For what reason do you desire to stay here?" he asked.

Ali cringed more than ever—if that were possible.

"Oh, *sahib*, there are bad men without, who would beat me."

The superintendent shook his head.

"Not so; the bad men are all here. Is not the jail the place provided for all bad men?"

The prophet was in a predicament. To tell the truth and say that all the bad men were *not* in jail would be a direct insult to the department to which the frowning superintendent belonged. To say that all the bad men were in jail would be to do away with his reason for wishing to remain.

He labored, and then:

"Yes, your Honor—your Honor knows all and speaks true words. But does not your Honor think that one or maybe two bad men, who were too small for the eye of your Honor to observe—may it be that one or two bad men are not in this jail?"

The superintendent shook his head.

"No; all the *budmash wallers* are here."

The superintendent spoke with authority, and Coomer Ali submitted.

"True; your Honor knows. But your Honor's servant has become very fond of your Honor. Therefore he would stay in jail and sweep and—do other low things!"

The white man grinned.

"Being a *topas* seems to suit you, eh?"

Ali squirmed, for be it understood that a *topas* is the lowest caste in India, where caste (religion) is graded, and where the "lowest" religions are made up of doers of the dirtiest jobs. There is no choice about the matter: Unless a man turn Christian—which is lowest of all in the native mind—a man needs must follow the religion of his father, be it "low" or "high."

But Ali, a one-time leader of Mohammedans—considering himself almost another Mohammed—had taken the *topas* job to escape being beaten, perhaps to death. He had lost caste, but he hoped it would not be known; as yet not even his worst enemy would have considered he had fallen so low as a *topas*.

Ali was still a Mohammedan, albeit a Mohammedan who had fallen from grace, one who had been defiled, and who needed purification. But it is almost hopeless for an American to try to understand caste in its true subtlety.

"I AM a *hadji, sahib,*" replied the prophet, not without dignity.

The superintendent, who had gone rather too far in his remarks anent religion and now saw it, again shook his head.

"Then I can not allow you to stay here as a sweeper. Why was I not informed that you had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and were a high-caste Mohammedan?" he concluded severely, fully aware that Ali had been given the choice of either being discharged or becoming a sweeper.

"Did not the *sahib* know?"

"I know now, and—this evening, after dark, you will leave the jail. Now go!"

Ali went, having no other choice, shaking with fear and hoping the sun would stand still and the day have no ending. He thought of praying, but concluded Allah would pay no attention to his request. Indeed, God was no doubt exceedingly angry with him about that sweeper business.

What was he to do? When evening came, that soulless superintendent would throw him out—to the wolves!

Would it do any good to pray that something unpleasant would happen to the superintendent? He pondered a while upon the various ways this might be accomplished, then decided it was too dangerous. He might be caught at it, and no one would believe him when he swore God had told him to do it!

But this notion germinated during the heat of the day, and bore fruit. More nearly happy than he had been since the days of his prophetship, he believed he saw his way clear to a prolonged stay in jail, where he was safe, and well fed, and the work, while not nice, was not hard.

Had not the superintendent *sahib*—brute that he was!—said himself that all bad men were in jail, because the jail had been built for the purpose of putting bad men into it? Well then, although the superintendent was a liar besides being a fool, Coomer Ali would take his word for it. He—Coomer Ali, the son of Ali the dingey *waller*, once a prophet—would become a bad man for one night only. Now just what sort of *budmash waller* would he become? Stealing was perhaps the most profitable, but if he

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intended to allow himself to be caught it was no use stealing. The police would take away his spoils, and besides his stealing would add another enemy to the list—and the man from whom he stole would lay for him when eventually he came out of jail.

He looked thoughtfully at the disgusting broom, badge of his degrading task. To become the sort of bad man he desired to become was far more difficult than he had expected it would be.

He wanted something that he could do without endangering his skin; something which could be done as soon as he left the jail; something not too bad—he had no desire to spend the rest of his life in jail—yet something which would bring about his immediate arrest. In the category of crime what was there which suited the need of Coomer Ali, who loved being in prison?

He thought of the various obscenities peculiar to natives when about to engage in religious riot, which culminate in insult to white women. Such acts were easy of performance, and had the added advantage of bringing the performer to the favorable notice of his coreligionists. Also, they were almost certain to lead to arrest.

It was the "almost" that deterred Coomer Ali. Because arrest was certain only if there were no armed Englishman in the vicinity at the time the obscenity took place. The trouble was that there always were, and—Coomer Ali did not desire to be shot.

True, the police sometimes succeeded in hustling the offender to jail before the outraged brother or husband could get into action, but such cases were rare—and the police were curiously slow about making arrests in such cases.

Time had been when, in his religious fervor, Ali would not have minded being shot. But since he had lost caste he was not so sure about the sort of reception the houris in paradise had in store for him—or rather he was sure, and the reception was not the amorous sort he coveted. Taking it altogether, therefore, he would not insult a white woman. Some less dangerous sort of crime must be thought of.

The hot, sticky hours passed, but Coomer Ali was no nearer to the solution of his problem. Slowly the shadows of afternoon lengthened until a cool breath of heaven swept lightly over the fevered face of the city.

The smoke of fires rose to form grotesque shapes, and the eternal voice of Calcutta changed into its evening-meal chatter. Presently the flying foxes began to sport across a low moon, and the time came for the prophet's discharge from jail.

A grinning *topas*—a real *topas*, this one, whose grin was an insult—came to Ali.

"*Burra sahib bolo bolow, toom*," he remarked, using words which were an added insult, which meant that the cynical superintendent desired the prophet's attendance, or, to be more exact, "Hi, you, the boss says you're to go to him."

But there was no come-back about Coomer Ali. Weak from his all-day wrestling with criminal intent, he obeyed the order without uttering any of the native repartee the *topas* desired and expected.

Balm it was to the soul of that *topas* to be in a position where he could with impunity insult one of a higher caste than his own. Outside the jail, had his filthy shadow happened to fall upon the food of Coomer Ali, he would either have cringed to the justifiable beating or tried to escape. But in jail it was quite different.

Besides, had not Coomer Ali demonstrated that all castes are equal by becoming himself a sweeper?

And so in fear and trembling Ali reported to the superintendent.

"You have my permission to leave the jail," explained the superintendent.

"But, *sahib*——"

"No, I can not allow you to stay here any longer. You came in here without any personal belongings. Sign here—make your mark if you can not write—which is a receipt for what you didn't have!"

Dazed, dumb, numb with terror, Ali made a curious hieroglyphic on the indicated line of the discharge book.

"I have been kind to you in allowing you to stay until dark, although I can not, of course, promise that no one has told your friends outside that you were to be discharged. However, if you keep in the shadow of the wall and then run for all you are worth, the men who may be waiting for you may not see you. Now—go!"

THE knees of Coomer Ali indicated a pronounced affection for one another, so that he found it very difficult to keep them separated. But, escorted by a grinning guard, he reached the gate of the jail, outside of which lurked

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all the dangers he could imagine—which were many and various. Even the gates were against him, or so his imagination concluded; for they not only opened with a disgusting slowness, but they made all the noise possible to them when opening.

But it was dark! The moon had set, and the furtive glances of Coomer Ali could see nothing that moved without. But that was no surety that there were not dozens of concealed enemies.

Indeed, as he suddenly appreciated, the fact of his seeing no one proved there were enemies—enemies too crafty to allow themselves to be seen by the jail officials—who, hidden, waited for him.

Desperately Ali attempted to engage the guard in conversation, frantically striving to stave off what he believed to be inevitable, if but for the space of a few words. But it was no use.

Flatter as he might, Ali could not interest the guard. To Ali's kindly inquiries concerning his charming family, the uncouth guard only answered curtly that he had no family—emphasizing his indifference to the prophet's predicament, his disinclination for conversation, and his desire to go to his supper, with a well-placed kick.

Ali was about to cry out, but remembered his lurking enemies and tried not to, the resulting noise being like unto the last word of a strangling duck. Then he heard his name called loudly, and he jumped. But it was only the vulgar *topas*, who came running, bearing in his itching hand one whole rupee, the parting gift of the not unkind superintendent.

"My commission?" requested the *topas*, who much disliked having to part with the rupee, but knew himself to be too well watched to attempt to hold on to it.

"Commission?"

Coomer Ali clutched the money, too dazed to understand what the custom had made practically legal.

"One anna," the *topas* declared.

Then Ali, remembering, also remembered thankfully he had no change. The guard was closing the gate, indifferent to the protest of the *topas*, who felt he had earned the anna.

Speaking with a sincerity that puzzled his creditor, Ali shook off the hand that clutched at his ragged and dirty linen.

"I will be back soon, when you will get your anna."

With which promise he began to run blindly into the dark, trusting to a weird prayer to protect him.

And as he ran, surprized at his immunity from harm, he began to realize what the rupee meant to him, and in what sorry straits he would have been without it. Not that he needed food—he had been recently fed—but that he wished to commit a crime.

Barred by his religion from every form of strong drink, Coomer Ali felt that his being an ex-prophet entitled him to break the law of Mohammed if he felt like it, and he was not the first of his cult to feel like it. With something stronger than water inside him, crime might come easier. In fact he knew that one drink made him indifferent to danger and stimulated his mental faculties into doing wonderful things.

Thus the rupee would raise him above the fear of his enemies—provided he obtained the drink before those enemies obtained him, and with him the rupee—and also show him the way back to jail.

He stopped running, much surprized at being still unhurt. Something must have occurred, he thought, which had drawn the attention of his enemies away from him. In this he believed truly, but not far enough.

For it never occurred to him that he could be forgotten altogether. Blessed with the peculiar egocentric view-point of the prophet—and others—Coomer Ali could not imagine anything of sufficient importance to cause men to forget his existence.

Recollecting with a shudder the awful threats of his once-followers when, protected by the police, he was taken to jail, and puffed up with the vanity of his tribe, he firmly believed that all the Mohammedans and most of the Hindus in Calcutta spent their waking hours thinking of him. In fact, he did not doubt that he filled their dreams.

Therefore, some sort of disguise was imperative. So distinguished a man as Coomer Ali would at once be spotted if he ventured into one of the bazaars—and to one of the bazaars he must go to obtain what he felt he needed.

But what sort of disguise? And where was he to get the wherewithal with which to disguise himself?

And then all at once he remembered his father. For many months the face of the

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honest, toiling dingey *waller* had never been in his mind, but now in his need he yearned for the security of the cozy, smelly, tiny cabin of the dingey. He had been born in that cabin, and his babyhood and boyhood had been spent aboard the dingey. Lying on his back, he had surprized his father by his curious ability to stare at the sun without blinking.

And no doubt his father would be overjoyed to see him. It must be rather flattering to be the father of so famous a son! So believed Coomer Ali at that moment, although it had never occurred to him before. Why, even now his father would certainly be sitting with other dingey *wallers* around the boat-lamp on the foredeck; and all the other men would be listening attentively and with due deference to the father of so famous a son—that is, when he talked about that son, of course. And how could he talk about anything else?

BY THIS time Coomer Ali had reached the edge of the *maidan;* but there he hesitated. The *maidan* —a fairly large common—was a lonely place at night, and reasoning as prophets reason, he saw in it a likely lurking-place for his enemies.

How these enemies had learned that he had just decided to go to his father—the decision had of course been born subconsciously some time before, which accounted for his taking the *maidan* direction — did not concern him. Only the bugaboo of his enemies could find room in a mind so filled with his self-importance, since fear can percolate through even the thick shell of vanity!

He thought of going round the city side of the Fort, thereby avoiding the lonely places, but after some further cogitation decided that the greater danger lay upon the more peopled streets; it would be better to chance the lurking enemy than to run the risk of being recognized by any one of perhaps a thousand.

Thus, in trepidation, treading like a cat upon thin ice, ready to fall flat at the first sign, he began his perilous trip across the *maidan.*

It was truly terrible the way sound carried in that comparative silence! Half a mile away, Calcutta roared like a river, but the *maidan* was a veritable oasis of stillness which, under the gently treading bare feet of Coomer Ali, reverberated like a beaten drum.

And there was always a playful wind there—a vile, mischevious bit of breeze which set every shrub to chattering like a ghost rebellious at the mandate of the devil! Coomer Ali had the honor of being the first to notice this peculiarity.

But nothing happened, and he met no one but a pariah dog who wanted to be friendly. Of course, as Ali thought, the dog might have been the hound of his enemies, sent to find him; and he congratulated himself upon the skilful manner in which he diverted the dog from his duty.

So, and the *maidan* was crossed. Another two hundred yards and he would reach the Hastings Ghat, where his father's boat would be resting for the night. He was panting somewhat from the nervous strain, while his nerves still twittered to every impression, but he felt himself to be safe.

It had been very cleverly done, had this outwitting of his foes! No doubt his God had helped a little—which proved to the prophet that he was again in favor in that quarter—but practically all the credit belonged to Coomer Ali, who was a brave and brainy person. How could his foes hope to get the better of him?

Nevertheless, he did not lose sight of his main purpose. It was all very well to dodge his enemies, and he could do so whenever he tried; but the time would come when he would have to sleep. Also, he would have to eat.

Such things were done more safely in jail. Back in the jail he must manage to get. To do this he must break the law. To break the law—or rather to be able to break the law effectively—he required a stimulant. To obtain that stimulant meant a visit to the bazaar.

In order to avoid recognition when he visited the bazaar he needed a disguise. In the matter of disguise Coomer Ali felt that his proud parent should help. There was no one else to whom he could turn, anyway.

But for the mosquitoes—which did not however trouble the prophet—it was quiet and peaceful round the Hastings Ghat. Tier upon tier of sailing-ships lay tied to the moorings, with the tiers of ungainly Arabs lower down the river. Now and

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again a burst of song, a call for a boat, the low voices of the boatmen, a distant mutter of a motor, the eternal murmur of the river—it was all as Coomer Ali remembered it.

For a moment a brief spasm of emotion gripped him—for after all he was going home—but it passed in the picture he imagined of his reception; his father's joy, the gaping dingey *wallers*—pointing him out as a very famous man. Swelling somewhat, Coomer Ali quickened his pace, and strode down the ghat. But there were many dingeys, and among so many it was difficult to distinguish the boat of his father. They were all alike, and every one had the same sort of lamp on its fore-deck.

Discreet inquiry became necessary, but to ask questions of sleeping men who have no desire to awaken is something requiring a certain amount of tact and a similar quantity of diplomacy. These qualities were conspicuous in Coomer Ali by their absence.

But he had no qualms about disturbing men who, after a hard day's work, were sleeping; and he was quite annoyed when they swore at him, grunting unintelligibly in answer to his question concerning the whereabouts of his father. However, he persevered until the men of perhaps a dozen dingeys were fairly well awake, and a babel of abuse rattled about his prophetic head.

"Where is my father? Tell me, where is his dingey?"

At length one man who appeared to have more perspicacity than his fellows growled out the obvious:

"Who in the name of shaitan is your father? Who are you, son of ten thousand unclean mothers?"

Coomer Ali was really distressed—not, however, by the unkindly reference to his ancestry, which was far too common a form of remark to rouse any indignation. No, what troubled him was the fact that—ignorant men though they were—they did not know him. Until that moment he had not believed such a thing possible.

His curious mental processes were puzzled. Expecting to be recognized, and much hurt because he was not, he was yet fearful of revealing his indentity! His greatly magnified danger draped his egoism like a shroud. He craved to be known and heralded, yet he feared to drop his cloak and reveal himself.

Curious person—very! But not at all uncommon. Then it occurred to him to try circumlocution.

"Who said I wanted *my* father, O *puggles?*" he shouted, wakening every sleeper within a quarter of a mile; so does the native voice carry. "I asked not for my father, but for the father of Coomer Ali, of whom all men have heard and speak."

A laugh greeted him—a laugh in which contempt and amusement were oddly blended. On a boat about ten yards away he heard a whisper. Then another voice:

"The father of that one is dead!"

"What?"

This from the prophet, surprized but ungrieved; annoyed perhaps.

"Yes, he killed himself!"

"You lie, pig!" shouted Coomer Ali.

"All right." The voice out of the darkness was quite indifferent about it.

"Why should the father of Coomer Ali kill himself?" demanded that father's son.

"Because," answered the voice very deliberately, "because he *was* that one's father. For why? *Oh, ee,* did not every man point him out, saying, 'That is the father of Coomer Ali, a fool who thought himself a prophet.'

"And he was a good man, too, was the father. But it seems that many good men are unlucky in their sons. Day after day he was compelled to hear himself pointed out as the father of that *puggle* who was in the jail-house.

"We knew him, too, this Coomer Ali, when he was young and before he was touched by the sun and made mad. But we could not comfort his father, who felt truly that he should have strangled that son when he was first born. So—and so that father killed himself, because he was so unfortunate as to be the father of such a son!"

Coomer Ali was in a condition hitherto foreign to him—he was speechless. Indeed, his whirling mind could not contain the situation. That his father was dead was not in itself anything of great moment—except in so far as he was unable to be of assistance to Coomer Ali. But the cause of his death——

For some little space Coomer Ali must have been unconscious on his feet! The shock did strange things to him, for when he again realized his surroundings he was walking with a staggering gait, several

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hundred yards from the Hastings Ghat. And behind him certain men chuckled and went peacefully to sleep.

But autosuggestion was not asleep. He had told himself that he was in great danger, and his followers had emphasized that telling before him—prior to his incarceration. Also, he had spent thirty days in making himself believe that jail was his only haven of safety.

Jail presupposed crime. Crime was impossible to Coomer Ali without stimulant. And now, careless of disguise, he went slowly in the direction of Lal Bazaar.

He walked in the middle of the road, but did not know it until a *gharry* nearly ran him down. The repartee which followed somewhat restored him. But the driver of the *gharry* did not seem to recognize him.

Of course it was dark—he had to console himself so; and he became almost his old self again by dwelling on this darkness, and blaming it for concealing his identity from the dingey *wallers*. Yet all the darkness of the two worlds could not excuse his father.

No, the dingey *wallers* had been mistaken. His father had committed suicide—there could hardly be any mistake about that—but the ignorant and low-born dingey *wallers* had tangled the cause of his so doing. He, Coomer Ali, had been the cause—so far the fools were correct; but his father had not killed himself because of sorrow for that. Oh, no—that were obviously impossible.

What had actually happened was this: Thinking and talking about the great deeds of his remarkable son, the father had gone mad—with joy. Many people went mad with joy. And in this condition—and no doubt anxious to carry the glad tidings concerning his wonderful son to paradise—his father had killed himself. Any one but an ill-bred dingey *waller* would have seen this.

So things were straightening out again. But the darkness would depart with the rising of the sun, and where was the disguise needed by Coomer Ali? Obviously nowhere else but the Lal Bazaar—in a bottle.

It had all been so arranged from the beginning—disguised in drink, Coomer Ali would commit a gentle crime, and again rest securely in jail amid disgusting bed-fellows. Besides, he was by this time very thirsty.

CALCUTTA is restless, even in its sleep—more so than other cities. Yet it is blessed by not being ruled by that strange breed which makes the overseeing of other people's morals its one excuse for existence. If a man wishes drink, he may drink; if he has no desire for it, he lets it alone—but he does not find it necessary to compel others to share his abiding thirst. Which is, of course, a most immoral state of affairs.

Thus Coomer Ali had no fears concerning his ability to obtain what he needed at that hour. And God had seen to it that the brutal superintendent *sahib* had given him one rupee.

But the number of people he met began to increase greatly as he drew near to his destination. Groups even jostled him, and in various places the songs of night made discord. He was quite surprized to find that by merely lifting the upper portion of his linen in front of his face he was effectually disguised, since the midnight revelers did not attempt to tear his disguise away from him.

The owner of the particular den of iniquity he desired to patronize made no comment when his guest kept his face hidden, for the East minds its own business; and soon Coomer Ali began to warm to the influence of native spirit. Through his veins it ran glowingly, bringing visions of greater peace and dreams of further joy.

But never an idea concerning crime did the spirit bring, although Coomer Ali drank and drank, and continued to drink until the rupee was no more—until, according to certain calculations, he should have been in a condition to murder half the population of Calcutta, and desirous of killing the remainder.

This lack of effect made him nervous. It would very soon be day, and dangerous. Before sunrise he had hoped to be in jail, with a crime committed and a headache coming. Instead, even the nervousness began to leave him, and desire for crime vanished in desire for sleep.

His swimming eyes took in the place, vacantly puzzling over certain changes which had occurred since he entered it. For instance, the one smoky lamp now had a family, several other smoky lamps, all of which bore a striking resemblance to the first one, being grouped lovingly around it.

The floor, built to fit the contour of the

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earth beneath instead of the earth being leveled before the floor was laid, now billowed gently like a calm and sleepy sea. Various other signs informed Coomer Ali that he was in no condition to commit anything.

His set gaze grew more set, and he stared unseeingly at nothing at all. Other guests viewed him with polite unconcern, and their chattering surged through the hot, humid air.

Suddenly the prophet was seen to stiffen. The linen he had so sedulously held to his face fell unheeded from his nerveless hand, his glazing eyes again took on an appearance of understanding, grew bright with fear, and began to bulge with terror.

It had required more than an hour and one whole rupee to take Coomer Ali to the country of Dontgiveadam, but it took only a few seconds to bring him back—a few seconds, and something else. Then with a howl of terror Coomer Ali jumped to his feet and fled, still howling, into the night, pursued by an elderly gentleman with a long white beard.

But the pursuit was short, with youth losing the race. Sober as to head, Coomer Ali was able thoroughly to appreciate the horror of his situation, but his legs were very drunk—so very drunk that even the will born of terror could not drive them as he wished. He wabbled, staggered, and collapsed—too weak even to howl any more—when the white-whiskered one, chuckling with glee, sank restfully upon the chest of the fallen and panting prophet.

Came a space when silence was broken only by heavy breathings. Then the prophet began to pray:

"O Allah— Please, good ghost, sit not so heavily upon my stomach— O Allah, thy servant— Please, *burra* ghost *sahib*, my inwards are distended with much spirit— Ouch— Why rest upon my drink? Let it——"

"Son of a pig!" interrupted the white-haired old gentleman. "So I have found you!"

"But, O good ghost, why couldn't you wait until I was dead?"

"Because, spawn of the evil one—" the prophet's father, for he it was, seemed to be somewhat careless regarding his son's ancestry—"we would not go to the same place. How could I leave paradise to thump you when you would be in Gehenna?"

This argument, while unanswerable, did not relieve the feelings of the unfortunate offspring. He was still sufficiently dazed to believe his father a ghost, and with the memory of the cause of his parent's death as told by the dingey *wallers* prodding at his conscience his agony of mind was pitiable. It was bad enough to have a ghost haunt one at any time, but when that ghost had become ghost solely on account of the haunted—words are unable to depict such a situation!

"But, good ghost, why did you die?"

The ghost spat in a most unspiritual manner, and shifted his weight depressingly upon his groaning seat.

"Fool, has the drink taken what little sense you got from me? Dog, you are mostly your mother—who had no better idea of decency than to give birth to thee! Who told you I was dead?"

SLOWLY the joyful import of these words seeped into the brain of Coomer Ali. The dingey *wallers* had lied, and his father had not killed himself. Therefore that which sat so heavily upon him was not a ghost! Coomer Ali squirmed rapidly, and unseated his parent.

"Old *puggle*—" he spoke with contempt—"you must have been drinking to act thus—and you call yourself a Mussulman!"

This in the tone of voice to which thousands had once listened enraptured.

The dingey *waller*, clawing and spitting like a very ancient cat, got to his feet, and father and son stood facing each other in the uncertain light of coming dawn.

"How did you get out of the jail?" gnashed the parent.

"That is a matter between myself and the superintendent *sahib*," answered the son loftily.

"So—I see—you were too foolish and lazy to do even the work of a *topas*, and the *burra sahib* kicked you out," replied the old man. Coomer Ali first called his father a liar and then ordered him to be silent.

"*Jute waller; chup!*"

"All right. But I heard you were out, and sought thee. Not that I love thee, but, because you were my son, it seemed my duty to warn thee."

And the old man turned on his heel, and began to walk away.

"Stay, father!"

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The prophet was strangely humble, all his old fear returning, and made all the more fearful by the dying of the drink within him.

"What was that warning?"

The dingey *waller* made no answer. He continued to walk away, with a rapidly-becoming-frantic prophet accompanying him.

"Tell me, father!"

And Coomer Ali laid a trembling hand upon his father's arm, only to have it shaken off contemptuously. The question and the action were repeated, with a similar result.

But Coomer Ali's fear was not a thing to be regarded lightly. Almost certan about the warning referred to, there was a possibility of still other danger; and the fear of this took possession of him.

Failing in his efforts to make his father speak or stop and listen to him, he flung himself upon the old man and bore him to the ground. There was a slight struggle, and then the old man submitted to being sat upon. But he obstinately refused to open his mouth.

"All right, then," explained the son after about five minutes of this. "We will stay here in this manner until you do speak."

This roused the parent, who was finding his position irksome.

"It does not trouble me, son of the devil. By and by it will be day, at which time *they* who seek thee will find us. I have only to wait thus for a very short time longer."

"But, father, tell me what it was you were going to warn me about and I will arise from off thy stomach."

"My stomach will survive. That thou feelest heavy upon it is but another proof that it was not meant to digest pork."

Then Coomer Ali, in the agony of his fear, insulted his father about as deeply as was possible. He pulled his father's beard! And the resultant shrieks and blasphemy brought a sleepy Sikh policeman, who impartially kicked both father and son.

"Pigs, why do you disturb the morning in this manner?" More kicks.

"Take him off my stomach," implored the old man.

The Sikh retorted with native repartee, quite unprintable, but declined to assist, explaining that it was beneath his dignity to touch either of them.

"All right—" again the old man spoke with enforced patience— "those who come shortly will attend to the matter of removing this parasite."

"For why?" queried the policeman.

"For defiling the Hindu temples," replied the wily old man.

The shot went home. Not that a Sikh is a Hindu proper, the sect having decided to worship one God about six hundred years ago, when it split from the Hindus as such. But the Sikh is sufficiently near to the Hindus to be at any rate sympathetic—many of them indeed feeling quite reverential as regards the polytheism from which they so long ago branched off. As a regiment the Sikh will fight the Hindu with gusto, but occasionally as individuals they are more than friendly. The policeman was irritated anyhow.

Therefore, forgetting the defilement just referred to, he gripped Coomer Ali by the neck, lifted him and shook him as a dog does a rat. But never yet did a rat so howl.

However, the weird, occasional howl is a concomitant of the Calcutta atmosphere. Between the yell of the sweet pedler and the shriek of the *bramlykite* that steals his wares the inhabitants have long ceased to differentiate, and as the noise made by Coomer Ali was somewere in between the two it caused no excitement.

Having shaken the prophet, the Sikh was in some doubt about what to do with him.

Openly to take him to some revengeful Hindu priest would be to advertise his sympathies, while to allow him to go free after so detestable a crime would weigh on his conscience.

True, he might arrest him on a charge of assault, and take the old man in as a witness and victim. But all that meant losing sleep through having to appear in court in the morning. He appealed jokingly and condescendingly to the old dingey *waller*.

"What shall we do with it?"

"Leave the dog with me; I have a friend, a Brahman," replied the father.

The policeman stared. That an ancient Mussulman should have a friend who was a high-caste Hindu was—now he thought of it—as strange as the old Mussulman's caring about the defilement of the Hindu temples.

The caste of the dingey *waller* had not been so obvious until the light grew, but now there was no doubt about it. With a shake of the head, indicating he was puzzled,

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the policeman decided to wash his hands of the affair by doing as the old man suggested.

LEFT together again, it dawned upon both father and son that certain explanations were due. What was the supposedly dead dingey *waller* doing in a native drinking-shop when he ought to be virtuously asleep?

Some words which he had dropped in his excitement had indicated a desire to find his offspring; but that he was at the moment seeking him appeared unlikely in the light of his question about his being out of jail. The place of their meeting also pointed to no anxious seeking.

All this as nearly as can be translated was the reasoning of Coomer Ali while his father contented himself with the previous question, to which he added the stern necessity of explaining why the prophet was found in a drinking-shop.

The son was the more voluble, although his teeth chattered with the grip of his fear and the morning chill of India.

"I was put out of the jail-house because the superintendent *sahib* said it was no place for a *hadij*."

"You are *not* a *hadji*," reproved the father.

"By deputy I am."

"Tush, what is that? You pay a man a few rupees, and because of the rupees when the man goes to Mecca you pretend you went there yourself. Don't call yourself a *hadji*—at least, not to me!"

The prophet did not argue the point, but pressed on to:

"So, father, being out of jail, and fearful of what might befall me at the hands of mine enemies, I sought thee, needing assistance to commit another crime, so as to get back into jail, where I am safe."

All this in a sort of gasp.

"You wanted me to help you to be a *budmash!* Why, pig, what do you take me for?"

"Yes," the son responded modestly.

For a moment the outraged parent meditated murder. His ancient fingers curled like the claws of some strange bird. Then they relaxed, and a slow grin was concealed in his vast beard.

"It was a good thought," he said gravely. "In the jail you are fed by the government, and for all it gives you it charges you nothing. I will arrange to get you into jail again."

"But," mentioned the son, "while I may pay no money there, I am compelled to do strange work—impolite work, O my father."

"The day comes," responded the parent as if he had not heard. "Soon will the *muezzin* call from the mosque. We must hasten to my dingey before we are observed. It is too near day to do anything now. Besides, I have to say my prayers; never have I missed my sunrise prayer.

"But this I promise: Before tomorrow dawns you will be on your way to jail—and unhurt!"

"Come, then—" the son desired nothing so much as concealment from several thousand imaginary Hindus and Mohammedans— "let us hasten."

And hasten they did, along the dusty road toward the Hastings Ghat. Only joyful anticipation could have so stirred the old man, who gallantly puffed along with his almost running son; and only fear could so have stirred the son.

And so in this manner they went home, where as many times in the long ago Coomer Ali was concealed at the extreme back of the cabin, among many other queer things. He slept through the grateful day—sleeping off the fumes of the terrible drink—while his father plied his trade about the river, chattered with his friends, cursed his enemies, smoked his hubble-bubble when occasion offered, and made his living.

About five o'clock that afternoon Coomer Ali was awakened by his father's kicks. He awoke to a beautiful headache and with a stout desire to remain where he was.

But this his father would by no means allow. Jail and safety the boy wanted; jail and safety he should have. He thought a moment, and spoke:

"Fool—" his voice was lowered— "I wake thee because you have been betrayed. Some spy saw me bring thee here, and told thine enemies. Arise quickly, that I may take thee to a place of safety!"

It was sufficient. Swiftly Coomer Ali obeyed, and in a moment he was standing upon the forward deck of the dingey, blinded by the sudden glare of the sun and his really awful headache. He swayed dizzily, and his father steadied him.

"This *ag-boat* (steamer) only came in today," lied the father. "I will hide thee aboard her in a secret place I have known for many years—but hurry."

It was an opportune moment. The

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steamer *Shahjehan* was crowded with native passengers and stevedores, the latter leaving to go ashore and the former leaving Calcutta for Rangoon. The mud-pilot was on board, and she would drop down the river at daylight, leaving the ghat and anchoring at Garden Reach for the night.

At probably no other time could the father of Coomer Ali have successfully "shanghaied" his son. Fully loaded, and leaving the wharf to make room for another steamer, the gangway was free to all until it was hoisted to the rail. Up this gangway the father hurried his son; then forward to the chain-locker hatch.

"Quick," he cautioned, "down there four steps. Then get off the ladder; there is a small nook where no man will seek thee."

Still dazed, Coomer Ali stepped cautiously over the hatch coaming, found the iron ladder with his bare toes, and descended to the small nook his father had spoken of—a place made by a few boards which formed a sort of very narrow shelf, probably intended as a repository for chain-hooks. It fitted the prophet well—about as well as would a coffin, for the nook was of that shape—but it could hardly have been called comfortable.

"Are there no gunny-sacks, or anything?" queried the son.

"Hush, fool—" the father knelt by the side of the hatch, and hissed down into it— "do you want the sailors, who are all Hindus, to hear thee?"

Coomer Ali did not; neither did his erratic mind reflect upon the strangeness of the sailors' religion, for of course every sailor aboard the ship was a stout Mohammedan. But his father did not want him to think. The old man continued:

"Lie here until I come for thee, which will be after midnight. If you feel the ship moving, take no note of it, for the mad English do such strange things, and often they turn their ships around in the night. I understand this turning has some religious significance, so take no notice of it, as I told you. Lie here in safety, and finish your sleep."

AND there, upon his narrow shelf, Coomer Ali was left. He at once fell asleep again, despite the lack of comfort. But his father had neglected to mention something, although he had kept his promise about seeing him on his way to jail—that is, he had kept it after a fashion.

The *Shahjehan* had on her deck certain passengers for Rangoon; but she had other passengers—not on her deck, but in a specially constructed cage down below. These other passengers were all murderers.

Instead of hanging these murderers a humane government had decreed they should be taken to the Andaman Islands, there to remain for the remainder of their natural lives, and make themselves useful. So because she was bound to go to Rangoon to pick up another cargo of murderers the *Shahjehan* carried certain freemen passengers for that place; but her first and most important destination was the penal settlement. Thus in a way the father of Coomer Ali had kept his promise—always provided no snooping sailor found the concealed prophet before the ship got out of the river.

But if Coomer Ali slept, the people about him did not, for the ship and the river upon which she floated was a scene of much activity. The native deck-passengers were a baffling scenario in themselves, most of them very nervous and jumpy because they had never traveled by sea before. Then they were all of them anxious about where they were to sleep, and so they at once began to spread their bedding upon selected portions of the deck, in order to preempt them.

When the rude *colashee* sailors, pursued by a shouting white man, needed the deck for purposes other than sleep, and unceremoniously removed the mats, pillows, pots, pans, bags of food, brass bowls, water-pipes, birds in cages, small children, grandparents, turmeric-stones, curry-basins, brass-bound chests with musical locks, and all the other impedimenta of the native, including his spare areca-nut and betel-leaf, coriander-seed and a few other things—then there was some confusion!

That Coomer Ali could sleep through such a riot was a tribute to his powers of sleeping and to the native gin he had absorbed the night before; because in addition to the noise aboard the ship frantic dingey-*wallers* surrounded her with a hideous chorus. A fleet of Arab *dhows*, a hundred or so feet distant, added its discord. Passing steamers found it necessary to proceed with wide-opened sirens, and every sailing-vessel in the harbor, to the number of nearly two hundred, had its crew actively employed

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chipping its iron plates with resounding hammers. There were also other sounds!

Yet he slept, and in due time—with added noise—the moorings were run in, and the *Shahjehan* proceeded down the river. After moving about a mile the anchor was let go, and from underneath the sleeping prophet roared the cable. He turned over once, came perilously near to falling off his perch, and went to sleep again.

During the night his rest was troubled by uneasy dreams, predominated by that of an arid desert across which he ran, pursued by his father. And shortly before dawn he awoke, collecting his scattered thoughts somewhat imperfectly and with infinite difficulty.

It was very dark on his shelf, and because of this darkness he supposed it was night. Of course it was not yet midnight, because his father had not come for him. He was tortured with thirst, and he even noticed that his resting-place was hot and stuffy—the latter condition being due to a careful *serang*, who had seen to it that the hatches had been battened down over the chain-locker.

For several years, it seemed, Coomer Ali waited for his father, but no father came to him. Neither did any one remove the hatches; and consequently Coomer Ali continued to believe it was still night, and not yet midnight.

Restless and irritable, he sought solace in rehearsing the things he would tell his father, and from his varied experiences he collected a choice assortment of curses to be used at that telling. Meanwhile his thirst increased, but he bore it stoically.

He marveled at the length of the "night," and pondered as deeply as he could when the ship began to hum with busy-ness. He could feel she was moving, and recollected his father's warning concerning the insane English, who moved their ships in the night in order to placate one of their numerous heathen gods.

Once in a fleeting way he wondered why he had never heard of this religious rite during all his youth spent upon the river.

A rumbling and clanking, disturbing to his aching head, began to annoy and even frighten him, until he recognized the sound as the cable coming over the windlass and tumbling into the locker. He had often heard it before, but he did not dream how deeply this particular hearing concerned himself, continuing to ascribe it to the religious rite before referred to. No sailors were sent into the chain-locker to stow the cable because the *Shahjehan* had anchored in such shallow water that the amount of cable used was too short to make this necessary. And presently the placid vibration of the screw told every soul aboard her—Coomer Ali excepted—that she was steaming full speed down the *Hugli*.

Only a few feet from the unhappy prophet the leg-ironed convicts were beginning their unhappy day. Closely penned and unable to do more than shuffle, whatever they thought must have been drenched with misery. Better, and far more humane, to have hanged them.

Not that the Andamans is a cruel prison—on the contrary, the fifteen thousand convicts at that settlement are better situated than any other "lifers"—but it is "final," and they do not understand. And the four days' voyage there is worse than hell can ever be, especially in the monsoon season. And the *Shahjehan* was leaving Calcutta at the break of the monsoon, which meant bad weather, and possible cyclone.

But even the convicts were better off than Coomer Ali, because they got without stint exactly the same food they were accustomed to getting; and at that moment they were having breakfast—with unlimited water, since the native does not use coffee or tea as a general rule.

Had Coomer Ali known what was hidden by the stout bulkhead he would have been even more unhappy. But what would he have felt had he known that his father had betrayed him—in a sense—and that it was broad day?

Neither would it have consoled him to learn he was safe from his "enemies," nor would he have been flattered at being perhaps the first son who was ever shanghaied by his own father! For Coomer Ali, while a prophet, was no pioneer.

BUT even to the most leaden intelligence truth will percolate if given sufficient time; and as the steady vibration continued and the darkness gave way to no glimmer of daylight, Coomer Ali began to doubt his father's faith. And suddenly—about noon—he realized that the crazy English must have moved the ship a considerable distance.

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She then must be somewhere other than alongside the old Hastings Ghat! Therefore—Coomer Ali shuddered—his father would not be able to find him, because when he came to the ship the ship would not be there but somewhere else!

This was probably the most cogent effort of reasoning Coomer Ali ever perpetrated, and when its cogency hit him with full force he no longer emulated a stoic upon his uncomfortable shelf. Instead he kicked with bare feet against the deck, the bulkhead and the empty, yawning space adjacent; he also howled. But as his throat was rather dry and the kicking of bare feet is not particularly sonorous his frantic appeal to all the world caused no comment.

Then while he kicked and screamed a small subconscious voice at last managed to make itself heard. The voice told Coomer Ali that his father had never satisfactorily explained why he was seeking him.

Could it be that the ungrateful parent had looked upon his son's fame as a sort of nuisance which he desired to put an end to? Had he some sinister design which he intended to put into effect as soon as the son left the jail, and upon which he had been meditating when they met in the drinking-shop?

An affirmative answer seemed to have a horrible bearing upon the present situation of the son. And what, in the name of Allah, was the end to be?

At this, Coomer Ali spent his remaining strength in an orchestration of kicks and howls. But he seemed to lack an audience. And then his one-cylinder memory, which was often missing, remembered that he had reached his present situation by groping his way down an iron ladder. Feeling like a reprieved criminal—for he still believed the darkness was caused by night—he cautiously moved about until he gripped the rungs.

Then he began to climb; but he did not climb far. His head met the heavy hatch and drew back into itself turtle-fashion, although it is unlikely that any turtle is sufficiently educated to utter what the head of Coomer Ali uttered.

Back on his shelf, he tried to think. It had been forced upon him that things had changed since his arrival on the ship. Had his low father put those boards to bar his way to the air—those boards which, meeting his head, had greatly increased his headache, something he had believed impossible? Coomer Ali began to have a very poor opinion of his father as a parent.

And while meditating upon this there came to him an explanation of the long night. The boards his father had placed there were keeping out the light of day. Then he was a prisoner! Was this what his father had meant when the old man promised to see him safely back in jail?

It was horrible. Men, many men, had died in jail. Was he going to die? Coomer Ali's situation had passed the point of toleration—he was growing delirious.

Meanwhile the steamer, aided by the powerful current, had so far progressed down the river that she was passing the village on the right bank known to sailors as "Little Calcutta;" the deck-passengers were having dinner, the convicts were again being fed, and the *colashees*, squatting about the forecastle, were at mess.

In the saloon the officers and four or five first-class passengers were also eating. On the bridge the plutocratic gentleman of the Bengal Pilot Service—the most exclusive and best paid pilot service in the world, to which men, recruited as boys from the *Conway* and *Worcester*, devote their lives—was being served with tiffin by his own *kitmutgar*.

All hands were thus eating except the unfortunate Coomer Ali, but he was saved the added horror of being aware of it.

The hot hours passed. Doing her utmost, the *Shahjehan* passed the Sunderbunds, made the Sandheads and discharged her pilot, who was rowed to one of the archaic brigs which are such startling monuments to British conservatism—a type of vessel which has served the pilot service since its inception in the days of "John Company."

There was not a breath of air, unless the hot blast which the steamer's progress forced out of the sullen atmosphere could be called air. Heavy curtains which were neither fog nor cloud obscured the sky. In fact the pilot had remarked phlegmatically when he went over the side, "It's remarkable cyclone weather"—a consideration which later caused the brig to strike her topmasts.

The captain agreed, and both the mercury and the aneroid corroborated; but he carried the mail, and not to go to sea meant a heavy daily fine. Besides, as he truly said, it was safer at sea, since cyclones have a playful habit of tearing vessels

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away from their anchors and landing them high and dry in the depths of the jungle!

Down below on his narrow shelf Coomer Ali lay in a high fever, and his occasional feeble calls no more reached the deck than did the squeaking of the rats in the hold. Some automatic sense kept him from rolling over the edge. Even his father would have pitied his condition.

BUT he had reached the end of this first stanza of his father's humor, and no doubt he was the only man in the Bay of Bengal to be benefited by the weather. Had it not been for the weather, it is horrible to think what might have happened to him, since the hatch was likely to remain in place until some sailor opened it to stow chain when the ship was leaving Port Blair—about seven days from the time of leaving Calcutta.

But the first officer, taking heed of the weather signs, called his *serang* to make everything secure, and personally took four sailors and the carpenter to batten down the hatches.

Now, he was a good sailor, this first mate, and before battening he had every hatch removed so that he could see it properly placed. The small chain-locker hatch did not escape his scrutiny, and when it was opened by the sailors Coomer Ali was enjoying one of his periods of consciousness. Consequently he called feebly.

The four *colashee* sailors fled at once; the Chinese carpenter paused long enough to drop his mallet, and then followed the sailors. The mate felt rather queer; then, standing his ground, swore at everything, called to the sailors and the carpenter to return, and began to investigate.

If this seem strange, try the experiment of opening a hatch in lowering cyclone weather —which so curiously affects men's minds— and of hearing a voice where no man is known to be!

The sailors, recovering, came to the mate's call, and Coomer Ali, as nearly dead as he was alive, and quite unable to give any account of himself, was lifted gently on deck. Believing himself in the hands of certain enemies, his last glimmer of consciousness went out.

"Humph,"—the mate reflectively removed his cheroot—"that's the ninety-ninth native stowaway I ever met—or maybe he's an accident."

In which last remark was meant no corroboration of the father of Coomer Ali; the mate, believing Coomer Ali to be a stevedore unwittingly carried away, having meant to say that Coomer Ali had come to his present pass accidentally.

"Just needs grub and a drink. Here, *colashee, umara boy bolow.*"

And when the boy arrived he was directed to pour a liberal potation of Scotch whisky into the unconscious prophet and then turn him over to the care of the sailors, the mate having other things to occupy his mind.

So, truly believing he was drawing his first breath in the wrong hereafter—the whisky being an off brand known in those days as "P. & O."—gasping and struggling for that same breath—for all the world still practises the idiotic method of trying to revive fainting persons by strangling them with drink or water—his throat burning and tasting of both fire and smoke, Coomer Ali returned to life under a lowering sky on Number One Hatch of the *Shahjehan.*

He coughed, swore feebly and looked about him at the grinning crowd; but he was no longer afraid, since half a pint of "P. & O." will turn a mouse into a bull-pup, or cause a spine to grow in a jellyfish.

"*Cai husta, hi?*" he grated, scowling at the pain of his raw throat.

The crowd no longer smiled, but drew together in small groups, looking at one another mysteriously, discussing the strange arrival. There was doubt among them until one with more imagination than his fellows raised an eloquent shoulder and shrugged it first in the direction of Coomer Ali, then toward the next hatch, down which wide opening were the caged convicts.

It was enough! Every one present hastened to beat his fellows to the understanding of the suggestion. Had the shrugger spoken his thought, he would have met with jeers; having suggested it with signs, it was at once accepted.

So this mysterious arrival was one of the convicts, whose good friends had rescued him, taken off his yellow uniform of degradation and dressed him in dirty linen. Just why the rescuers should have hidden their rescued friend right under the noses of the Sikh guards—who were even then looking incuriously at the rabble gathered about—was something the suggester did not have to explain, since the under-strata of intelligence believes what it wants to believe,

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which brings about dire consequences in both politics and religion.

They made the prophet welcome, brought him curry *bat* from the sailors' galley, and gathered about him as if to continue to hide him. It was all very amusing to the second mate, who was watching the performance from the bridge.

But things were going to happen on that scurrying ship, running like some scared animal for deep water. It was as yet early evening—a curious gray sort of light which made everything spectrally visible, lingering as if caught and unable to escape in that heavy atmosphere—and the vessel looked uncanny without her awnings, stripped clean for the coming storm.

The deck-passengers, still ignorant of what it all meant, were again laying their sleeping-mats, which had been disturbed by the hurrying sailors.

Suddenly, as if some being had commanded it, silence fell on the *Shahjehan*. It was curious. The monkey-like chattering ceased, the sailors were no longer shouting at their work, no officer was shouting orders; only the engines, throbbing like the overworked heart of a racing athlete, were heard.

THE captain's voice caused men to start.

"Mr. Clingan"—he spoke in ordinary tones that sounded like a hushed voice at a sick-bed, when ordinarily he would have shouted from his post on the bridge—"better have the deck-passengers put down below in Number Three, on top of the coal. Leave one hatch off for air, but have a good man standing by with the carpenter to put it on in a hurry."

It was weird the way his voice carried in the stillness, and weirdly came the mate's, "Aye, aye, sir."

There was a slight stir mingled with murmurs of disapproval while the native deck-passengers were being stowed away, but it soon passed. And again that terrible calm settled over everything. The sea was moving in long, unbroken heavings indicative of wind far away that had been blowing a long time, and through and over these swells the steamer progressed.

Gradually the ear became accustomed to the unusual quiet, but even the captain jumped and swore under his breath when the pantryman in his room under the saloon dropped a dish which broke as it fell.

The few first-class passengers grouped about the saloon-deck looked at one another significantly when the chief engineer, who had been so spotless during dinner, made his way to the bridge, clothed in grimy, greasy duck, there to whisper something to the "Old Man." The captain nodded and beckoned to the chief officer, and the three whispered together, finally going into the chartroom.

A few minutes later the engineer made his way down the ladder, to be immediately surrounded by the first-class passengers.

"Going to be a cyclone, Mr. MacGregor?"

The engineer twisted his fingers in his beard.

"How long, d'ye think, has Captain Edge had this steamer on this run?"

There was a chorus of silence.

"Well, I'll tell ye. It'll be twenty years tomorrow since he took command and made his first passage to Port Blair, and he's been through so many cyclones that he's forgotten how many it is; but he never saw the glass so low.

"Neither has Clingan, who's been running around the Bay ever since he got his second mate's ticket. Neither have I, and I've been here and round about since before some of ye were born. Form yer own conclusions, gentlemen."

And the gloomy Scot borrowed a cigar from the nearest passenger and went on his way below to his engines.

The silence continued, until the *thump, thump* of the engines began to run into rimes in men's minds, and they found themselves making up words in time to the throbbing. Everything that could be done had been done. When the wind came—if wind did come—the direction of the center could be determined—or so the books say—and the steamer headed into a "safe quadrant;" for the present she was kept on her usual course for Port Blair.

COOMER ALI, what with the whisky and the curry, had sufficiently recovered to be interested in one of the sailor's hubble-bubbles, and he smoked, squatting with his back to the bow, staring up at the bridge. Usually his advent would have occasioned some interest and he would have been taken to the captain and entered in the log, as was legal.

But now other things filled the mind of

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authority, and Coomer Ali—somewhat luckily for him—was forgotten by all but a few of the sailors and deck-passengers and the gentleman from whom he had borrowed the pipe. But the uncanny weather was beginning to affect even him, and his soul was beginning to respond to it.

In the breast of Coomer Ali was growing a strong desire to preach; and presently he laid aside the hubble-bubble, knelt, bowed to the deck a few times, rose to his feet, and began to howl after the fashion of the Mohammedan revivalist.

His was not a pleasing voice, and it swept with blood-curdling effect all over the ship. The captain, pacing the bridge nervously, stopped, leaned on the rail and stared.

Unless it happened during the night the high-pitched singsong of the native was tolerated on ships carrying native crews. But the horrible discord of the prophet, accompanied by frantic gestures which were just visible, was something no white man, and few others, could tolerate while waiting for something to happen. It was an unlucky sort of noise, anyway.

"What the —— is that?"

The first officer, who had been coming up the ladder, reached the captain's side.

"Must be that —— stowaway gone crazy," he explained.

"Stowaway?"

"Yes, sir; either that or we carried him away by accident."

And the mate explained the finding of Coomer Ali.

"Well, make him stop anyway. That row would bring a cyclone even if there wasn't a chance of one coming."

Consequently firm hands were laid on the protesting prophet and he was taken aft, where for greater safety he was hustled down below and told to remain among the deck-passengers, while a brutal native quartermaster stood by to see that none of them smoked.

The close confinement—which was to become much closer—did not trouble the passengers, who made themselves comfortable after their own peculiar fashion, chattering like a cage of monkeys, quite ignorant of the reason for their being sent below, and blissfully indifferent to the chances of weather, for the ship was not even rolling—yet!

But the coming of Coomer Ali among them occasioned quite a little excitement—the sort caused by the entrance of a celebrated poet into a fashionable drawing-room. At last what he had both craved and feared happened—he was recognized!

He had gone through a great deal, but his recuperative powers were apparently good, and, looking slightly overtrained, the prophet—whose rather poor memory played him sad tricks—had hardly reached the foot of the ladder before a skinny, elderly gentleman, who was clothed not unappropriately in a lace skull-cap and a dirty handkerchief, stiffened into a dramatic attitude and pointed with an unmanicured finger, shrilling, "Look what the sailors have fished out of the black water," or words to that effect.

The prophet made a desperate effort to escape, but the quartermaster had no compassion—in fact, he seemed to enjoy the situation—and he shook off the protesting Coomer Ali, and bade him remain below with his "friends."

"Why," the elderly gentleman went on, "why are you not happy, O holy one?"

Coomer Ali did something he had perhaps never been known to do before—he kept silent. The majority of the male native passengers gathered around him, grinning expectantly, as does the human animal the world over in similar situations.

"Will you not condescend to speak to thy faithful followers, O most holy *hadji?*" whined the old man, contorting his body into intricate attitudes.

No answer.

"It must be—" the old man turned to the rest of the mob—"it must be that some enemy of an infidel has tied the tongue of our holy one. Friends, hold his head while I untie his tongue, so that we may enjoy his mellow words."

The delighted crowd gathered closely. Two of them grasped the head of Coomer Ali while two others began roughly to force open his mouth.

At that moment the wind came. And all other sounds ceased to be. Thrown almost on her beam ends, the *Shahjehan* struggled like a living thing to right herself, but without success. The terrible force of the wind held her down in spite of all that rudder and propeller could do to bring her head to it.

To the superstitious Mohammedans all this was the act of God—the act of an angry God, a God who had seen one of His holy ones mistreated.

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"After all, he must have been a prophet."

The words of the old man, sheltered by being in the hold, carried to the man nearest to him, and that one with some difficulty answered by thrusting his bare heel into the old man's mouth.

Hanging to the ladder, a somewhat scared quartermaster gazed beneath him at the mess, which at any other time would have made him laugh. For when the steamer went over she very naturally threw the deck-passengers to leeward.

Consequently a writhing mess of men, women, children and one somewhat damaged prophet—still apparently in good standing however—struggled to climb a deck which a few moments before had been flat, but which now leered at them from an angle of nearly ninety degrees.

Not a passenger had known of the cyclone's coming, and not a one of them doubted that it was a judgment—God's way of resenting the insult to His prophet. Therefore two things needed to be done quickly—first, the old man who had started the trouble must be killed; second, Coomer Ali must be placated and pleaded with to ask God to make the deck again straight.

But, as all who have been on their beam ends know, it is no easy matter to climb; and about the only result of the passengers' effort was a further mix-up. Thereupon a horrible and utterly indescribable wailing filled the hold; but to the clinging quartermaster it sounded like only a distant whisper which was trying to make itself heard against the clangor of the hurricane.

WORSE was to come, for the sea was rising rapidly, and the water was very shallow. Already a sheet of spindrift was blowing clear across the floundering vessel, blinding all who attempted to look to windward; and the sailors, caught helplessly when the storm broke, clung like wisps of wetness to whatever stanchion or rail they had succeeded in reaching.

On the bridge the captain had beckoned the mate into the chartroom—by the lee door, since a hundred men could not have opened the weather one against the force of that wind.

"Great stuff, the 'Law of Storms'!" gasped the Old Man in the sudden calm of the chartroom. "I tried to face the wind, to count eight points to the right and find the center, just as the book says, but ——! The wind seemed to be blowing from about sixteen points all at once! I defy any man to tell its direction."

"She's still on her course," the mate responded.

"Yes, but we can not let her lie like this with the sea getting up the way it is, and as she won't come up we must try to get her before it. Wish we'd stayed at anchor!"

They went out on deck again after a look at the chart. There was not very much room for maneuvering in those narrow waters. Besides, the ship was drifting rapidly, making her position more doubtful with every minute.

The heavy night had closed in, with what seemed like a pall of black resting on the mastheads. Heavy seas began to break across the forecastle. Now and again a flash of lightning showed her dripping, deserted decks.

At that moment the mate remembered the open hatch above the deck-passengers, which the native quartermaster might not have had the wit to close; and, leaving the bridge, he began to make his perilous way aft. There was nothing else to do. As long as the helm and engines performed their allotted tasks there was nothing the mate could do except go around and see that everything was made fast.

He struggled along the weather rail—the lee rail was under water—the angle of which made a certain amount of shelter from both the flattening force of the wind and the needle-like spray; and as he went along he ruminated upon the stability of the ship under him.

Not that her hull gave him any concern—that was stoutly built in the days before iron ships were tacked together. His fears were chiefly concerned with her somewhat ancient decks and hatches, which the weight of heavy seas might well be expected to stave in, as well as with her rather light, hot-weather superstructure. The ensemble gave the mate acute concern, because the Indian cyclone lasts sometimes for days, never less than a dozen hours; being quite unlike its prairie brother, the tornado, in that regard. And every minute the sea was getting up.

For a moment the mate hung on limply to the rail, stunned by the weight of a thought. They were in the most shallow part of the Bay, where a really heavy sea

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might cause the ship to pound on the bottom. And if the captain managed to get her before it—why, ——'s bells, she would ground.

Their only "safety" lay in hanging on, beam ends or no beam ends! To get her before it, even if on an even keel, meant heading for the shallowest part of that shallow portion of the Bay.

The mate hesitated, tried to look to windward over the rail; but the force of the wind strangled him. Should he go back and remind the captain about the shallows? But the Old Man knew, knew even better than did the mate. Besides, that hatch must be battened down. Where was the carpenter, the *serang*, the crew?

He blew his whistle, but nothing answered. Likely enough all hands were still clinging to whatever security had offered when the wind heeled the *Shahjehan* over—every man to his own sanctuary—and it would have taken far more than the mate's whistle to move any one of them, even if any one of them heard it.

The mate clawed his slow way along, wondering whether he would ever see the deck straight again and walk easily fore and aft. He imagined with a shudder the unhappy, manacled convicts in their cage down below, without light and soon without any fresh air. For that hatch was battened down, and to remove its tarpaulin meant swamping the ship, because the hatch lay just forward of the bridge, where the heaviest seas were bound to come over. There was no ventilator!

In that hold were six Sikhs and one hundred and fifty convicts. Well, they would be more comfortable than he was, and feel far more secure in their dry hold—as long as the air held out.

An ugly sea reared its head over the rail, but sank out of sight again as if disappointed at its inability to get over, spitting its determination to return with more strength. He would have to hurry with that hatch; if that sea had managed to get over the rail at least twenty tons of water would have come aboard, and most of it would have found its way down Number Three.

His clinging to whatever offered, and his dangerous swings, reminded him of the gym of his school-days. The roar of the wind, he felt sure, had deafened him for the rest of his life; and the weight of the storm was beginning to numb his mind, just as a blizzard does.

In fact, hanging on desperately about eight yards from his destination, unable to see his hand when he held it before his face, the mate thought seriously of giving up his effort to reach the hatch. He pictured his room; it would be almost quiet and certainly comfortable there. Why bother about a lot of —— natives?

He shivered, for in spite of his exertion it was cold, and he was wet to the skin. He wondered where his boy, his servant, had hidden himself, and made a mental picture of him curled up in his master's bunk.

It was mighty lucky he had bundled the deck-passengers down below. How was he going to make across that bare bit of deck with nothing to hang on to? Would the ship never right? If she would only come up for a minute it would help him get to the hatch.

THE engines were, so far as he knew, still going; but how about the stokers? How could they feed their furnaces with the deck at such an angle? It seemed that the Old Man had failed to get her before the wind.

How the —— was he going to get to that hatch? Might have saved himself a lot of trouble if he'd only battened it down when he battened down the others! Of course that fool *seecunny* would never think of doing it.

And then he realized his helplessness, even if he did succeed in reaching the hatch. In that terrible wind the hatches would be carried out of his hands when he tried to put them in their places, even if the quartermaster helped him.

Then he swore; —— fool, why, how would he ever find the hatches? They had been lying by the side of the coamings before the wind came, but by this time they were away down to leeward, if not overboard. Impossible to find them in this darkness, and impossible to handle them in such a wind if he did find them.

He swore again. What did that matter? It was his duty to get those hatches on, or do the best he could to find some sort of substitutes. If he didn't, the first few seas would fill the hold, drown the native passengers, and eventually swamp the *Shahjehan*.

The mate worked his way along under the weather rail until he felt as sure as he

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could feel that the hatch he sought was immediately beneath him. Then he let himself slide—for, the *Shahjehan* being a steamer, there were no ropes to help him—bringing up heavily against the hatch-coamings.

So far so good. He clawed his way round to the open after end, and thrust a tentative foot over the coaming to investigate. The foot met against something soft, which seemed to be human. The quartermaster!

Another sea curled over the rail, and several tons of water showed how rapidly the sea was rising. It broke over the mate, and he tried to cover the opening with his body. Much bigger seas would soon be coming over, but this one, in spite of its human obstacle, managed to curl over the hatch-coamings like a small cataract, pouring down upon the tangled human beings below.

A wail which rose even above the howl of the hurricane told the mate that the native passengers were still alive, but wet. He kicked vigorously at what he believed to be quartermaster, and felt it move.

"Come up here, you!" he bawled. "*Uper ow*, hatches *la gow*," and various other remarks in more or less grammatical Hindustani.

The quartermaster did his best to obey, and the mate assisted him, until they were both out of the hatch, clinging to the coamings. Punching and pushing—for it was useless to shout, since he could no longer shelter his voice in the hatchway—the mate managed to convey to the *secunny* what he wanted done; and in some way they managed to drag the rest of the tarpaulin over the orifice and fasten it down.

"Now the hatches!" the mate shouted into the quartermaster's ear, but that one heard only the wind.

However, he knew what was wanted, much as he disliked the assignment; and, native-fashion, he began feebly to feel in his immediate vicinity for the missing hatches, knowing quite well that they had been carried to leeward! But the mate knew the type of mind he dealt with. He loosened the quartermaster's grip from the hatch-coamings and leaned his weight upon the other, and together they slid down to leeward, into four feet of raging water, scraping their shins and bumping heavily against many things. But they did not find the hatch.

At that moment the ship righted and, rolling frightfully, began to run before the wind. The seas at once climbed over the lowered weather rail, filling her decks. Half-drowned and fully aware of the uselessness of further search for the missing hatch, the mate dragged the quartermaster to the ladder leading to the saloon-deck. The bridge was the only place where he could be of use now, but something must be put on that hatch.

If he could only see! Any lamp would blow out in that wind. And where were the other officers? Why hadn't he thought of them before—his juniors? He had been doing their work.

Anger, mixed with a sort of trepidation, filled the mate as he struggled toward the bridge. He realized that several very heavy seas had come aboard, seas from which he had been protected by the wide saloon-deck.

He let go of the quartermaster, who tried to follow him, and felt his way along where he had often danced with pretty women. He had never believed such darkness to be possible, or that only the one numbing sound of the hurricane could so fill a man's ears.

THE saloon-deck was bounded by the usual iron railing, and by this rail the mate guided himself. Suddenly he came to the end of it long before it should have curved down to the forward ladder. It ended now in a twisted, broken mass of iron. Like so much thin wire which one twists between one's fingers had the wind used this two-inch iron.

But the mere carrying-away of the forward rail and ladder was nothing. As the mate, borne down by the force of the wind, breathless, blind, clung to the last, broken stanchion he understood that a terrible calamity had overtaken the vessel; and that understanding explained everything that had been troubling him; the whereabouts of the junior officers, for instance.

No doubt, with the breaking of the wind those juniors had clawed their way to the bridge, seeking orders. In the dark he, the first officer, had not seen them, and the howling of the wind had drowned any shouting they might have done.

During his terrible journey forward the juniors had gained the chartroom on the

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bridge, and no doubt the *serang*, with some of the crew as well as the other quartermasters, had also reached there. For the bridge was the one place they would all try to get to.

Well, there was no longer any bridge. That awful wind had plucked at everything that showed above the main rail, just as a man might pluck at a casual weed, and, wrenching everything from iron holdings, carried it overboard with as much ease as if those tons of wood and iron had been a tattered pocket handkerchief. The forward mast had gone also, but the mate could not see that, although it was gradually borne on him that the loss of her top-hamper was the cause of her righting.

But how many men had been carried overboard? Apparently the captain and all the other officers, as well as the *serang*, the quartermasters and most of the crew. The wheel and the steam steering-gear had gone with the rest, and the ship was at the mercy of the wind.

No, not quite—unless the engines had stopped. But had they? What had happened below when the telegraph had been torn from its place—what signal had it conveyed to the engineers when it went overboard with the bridge, breaking its connecting wires? This and a hundred other questions whirled through the mate's dazed mind.

Another great sea managed to reach the saloon-deck, almost smothering the man; but he held on, and presently got his head above water again. She wouldn't stand many such seas, because a sea which reached the saloon-deck must have filled the main-deck fore and aft, and the mate knew the hatches would soon go, in spite of his careful battening.

Besides, at any moment some Sikh guard might succeed in forcing his way from down below—an easy job with an ax—and the mate, thinking of the quality of the air in Number Two—what with the guards and the hundred and fifty convicts—would not have blamed them for the attempt, even if it did mean the loss of the ship. The ship was a loss anyhow.

A ghastly feeling of loneliness crowded the man. He hung on, the center of a Stygian world of elemental strife, and the sole human being there. Then it flashed to him that he was in charge—the captain having been carried overboard left the mate in command—and he stiffened to the responsibility, impotent though it found him.

He wondered what he should do. Even to loosen his hold on the stanchion was a great risk, for he was helpless in that wind, and at any moment one of the almost continuous seas might crush him to the deck and carry him overboard.

But it was his duty to do something—to do what he could. The ship was in his charge, even if she was a wreck, and it was being carried helplessly toward some hungry, waiting rocks. His job was to try to get her to steer, to find men.

Again, the engines. Were they still working? The ship shivered to the force of the wind, making it impossible to discover whether the engines turned or not.

He must try to get below to the engine-room. If he could do that he might get some stokers from the chief and rig the hand steering-gear—if the rudder had not been washed away.

What if it had—the mate was becoming angry—hadn't jury-rudders been rigged before? They had—but not during a cyclone. But the last was something the mate did not admit—he was just beginning to fight.

But how was he going to get below? The cabins and companionways on the saloon-deck were gone. The mate could not see, but he knew what a mass of splintered wreckage lay just to leeward of him. He could not get down that way. To go aft again meant another unpleasant journey, at the end of which he would probably find the alleyway doors fastened.

Why didn't the engineers show some interest in the ship? Was he the only man that cared? Ah—he grinned grimly—he would try to reach the engineers' messroom. He started aft again.

He was not in any sense an imaginative man, this mate, but it was gradually being forced upon him that there was something more than strange about his meeting never a soul. Altogether there had been five hundred persons aboard when the pilot left her. Where had they all got to?

He paused in his journey as another sea engulfed him. Twisting a leg about the rail, he hung on, wondering if the rail would hold. He did this only when the seas were exceptionally big; for the "little ones" which came over continuously he cared not

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at all. His white-duck uniform clung to him with chilly familiarity, but the salt water felt warm by comparison.

With a sudden, angry exclamation he struck his forehead with his open hand. He was going crazy, he told himself—for how could he reach the messroom if the alleyway doors were fastened?

And he had never stopped to think of the effect of the tons of water which were pouring down below from the saloon-deck. The engineers would be cursing the deck-officers about that water, but it would never enter their heads to do anything to try to stop it.

RUMINATING after this fashion, bruising his hands and legs against the rail, the mate again reached the after-ladder of the saloon-deck. Then it occurred to him that there had been a quartermaster with him when he had last used that ladder.

What had become of the quartermaster? Washed overboard perhaps—or had he found the rest of the ship's people?

It was curious, although of course a hundred men could have gone overboard from right alongside the mate without his being aware of their going. The darkness and noise of the wind would effectually conceal the execution of a brigade.

It would be best to keep to windward, especially if he managed to get one of the alleyway doors open. If she went over again when he was half-way through the lee door it would flood the engine-room; and such things always happened when one was half-way through a door!

He felt tentatively with his foot. Yes, the ladder was still in place. And then he again remembered the open hatch, to close which had been his object when he had first left the bridge. Good God, Number Three must be full of water! And—that swarm of deck-passengers! Oh, well, they had only gone ahead, that was all.

Still he ought to try to fix that hatch. The ship still floated, and there was no sense in letting her swamp if it could be helped.

The mate did not trust to the brass rail of the ladder; instead he turned and faced the steps, hugging them with his arms one by one as he went down. The seas were not so heavy at this point, having spent their breaking fury on the more forward portion of the saloon-deck.

Nearing the lower steps, the mate hunched into himself with a shriek. Not that he heard his cry—the wind took care of that; he just knew he shrieked. Then he swore; but his cry had been excusable. It was so long since he had been conscious of another human being—he had been alone, it seemed, for years—that when human hands had clawed at his legs on the ladder he had cried out in a sort of fear.

They felt for each other, these two lost beings in a hellish orgy of wind and sea—feeling at each other for some sort of recognition like blind things meeting their own kind for the first time; and the mate was half-curious, half-afraid of what he had met in the dark.

It was a native, and by his rags one of the deck-passengers—perhaps the only one to escape from the sea-filled Number Three hatch. Rather roughly, because he had more important matters on his mind than native passengers, the mate continued to descend.

But the passenger, in an agony of fear to which he could not become accustomed, would not be shaken off. He clung to the mate like a monkey, knowing him for a white man by his size and clothes. About the Englishman would be safety; they could always do things.

Kill him the Englishman might, but not until he did kill him would that native let go. In all this howling hell the wet *sahib* was his one hope of succor.

Through a period of infinite time the native had struggled with his companions in Number Three for the ladder leading to the deck, while a Niagara poured down over them, filling the place. His frenzied fear giving him strength, he had won upward while the others drowned.

More dead than alive, he could still cling, and so he clung, much to the disgust of the weary mate, who could have knocked the native out with the blow he was too decent to give. Out of his own experience he culled sympathy for the native, thinking grimly of that other sailor, *Sindbad*, and his sea-given incubus. The native might be of some use, anyway.

The latter suggestion would never have come to the mate if he had known the history of him who clung to him. For of course it was Coomer Ali. It was a clear case of the survival of the unfit, for out of all the deck-passengers in Number Three

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hatch the *ci-devant* prophet was the sole survivor.

Naturally when the seas began to pour down the natives believed the ship to be sinking—whereupon a terrible struggle began for the narrow, perpendicular iron ladder. Perhaps the stronger passengers killed one another; perhaps Coomer Ali, more terrified than his fellows, rose to greater feats of activity—whatever occurred, he came out alive, to cling, a shivering, unpleasant sort of parasite, to the chief officer of the *Shahjehan*.

To his surprize the officer had no trouble whatever in opening the alleyway door. Watching the seas, he made a jump for it, swung it open, stepped over the coaming—Coomer Ali still with him—and into the alleyway.

As he hurriedly shut the door—under the after-break of the saloon-deck it was protected from the wind—the inch of iron came between him and the storm. It was a curious, comforting sensation; from the deadening force of a gale blowing at the rate of a hundred miles an hour or more, he suddenly found himself in an absolute calm! Also, the noise of the wind and sea became almost remote—removed by the dividing door to a distance.

All sailors have experienced this sudden change when going below out of a hurricane. It gives one the impression of being in, and belonging to, two different worlds at the same time.

And in the sudden comfort existence appears to become normal; the confusion of mind due to the buffeting on deck gives way to peace; the sense of grave danger becomes more like a memory than a pressing need for care; one relaxes and thinks of food and sleep. Truly the best recipe for being drowned at sea is to get into one's bunk, cover one's head with the blankets, and wait for the water to fill the cabin—in the mean while trying to forget the inevitable.

And the effect on the clinging Coomer Ali was just as natural. He became himself again, slipping away from the mate, cringing, fearful, strictly native.

The mate made for the messroom of the engineers. At the oilcloth-covered table were seated the second and fourth engineers, calmly enjoying a meal, which was being served to them in the usual manner by their mess-boy!

THE mate stared, as well he might, at his natural enemies. He was quite willing to believe that they were not as yet aware that a cyclone had struck the vessel, but he felt terribly annoyed that they did not appear interested in his own recent experiences.

They both glanced carelessly at him as if his wet, strained and generally disordered state were an every-day affair. Then the second engineer nodded carelessly and ordered the mess-boy to give him more coffee. This last was too much for the mate, parched with the storm-thirst as he was. Pushing aside the boy, he seized the coffee-pot and commenced to drink.

The two engineers looked at each other and stopped eating. For an officer of the deck calmly to walk into the engineers' messroom, in a ship were there was more than the usual enmity between the engine-room and the executive, was in itself both an insult and a crime; but to drink their coffee! Words failed!

They were about to throw themselves bodily upon the mate and bounce him out on deck, where he belonged, when that officer put down his pot with a sigh of satisfaction and said quietly:

"I suppose you know that the bridge was washed overboard, and that the Old Man, the second, third and fourth mates, as well as the quartermasters and most of the crew went with it. Number Three hatch is full up, the deck-passengers must all be drowned, and the ship may sink any minute.

"I'll be —— if I can take it all in, after leaving the deck the way it is—and having the time of my life to get here at all—to find you chaps eating as unconcerned as if we were in port. Didn't the seas come down the companionway from the saloon-deck?"

The second engineer looked at the fourth, then back at the mate.

"There is no companionway from the saloon-deck on this ship," he said quietly. "There's an inch iron deck fore and aft. The superstructure was all wood, which is why it went overboard, if it has gone."

"My God!"

The mate struck his forehead.

"And thank God! I mixed this one with another! Must have been the wind; it does queer things to a man's mind.* So

*I have seen this lapse of mind actually happen to an officer.

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that's why you fellows are carrying on as usual. Did nothing happen when the telegraph went?"

"There was some sort of jangle, but we thought one of the deck-officers had fallen against it," replied the second engineer.

Then the mate roused to his responsibility.

"There's the chief?" he asked briskly. "We may save her yet."

Now, how that mate, ably seconded by the chief engineer, who turned his stokers into harried deck-hands, saved the *Shahjehan* is an epic of the sea; but it is far too technical an epic to be of interest to any reader but the professional sailor. Besides, Coomer Ali is the "hero" of this tale, not the mate.

In course of time, after the cyclone had done its worst and the *Shahjehan* had dodged the shoals as if she knew all about them, the mate rigged a jury-rudder—for the first rudder had been smashed about until the pintles broke, after the steering-gear ceased to control it—and brought her back to the Sandheads.

During the period of rigging this rudder Coomer Ali worked. Indeed, he had not believed it was possible for one man to do so much work, or that any *sahib* could be so cruel as to compel him to such toil. But all the mate's sympathies were with his reputation, and he scientifically got out of the unhappy prophet every calory of energy that the food he ate put into him.

So at last, and under her own steam and helm, the *Shahjehan* once more reached the Hastings Ghat, bearing with her a native who was possessed with a burning desire to meet his pa. Going up the river, the ship had been an object of great interest; moored, her people became the center of attention—a pompous person who represented Authority, and who was armed with a note-book, and attended by a native policeman, being anxious to obtain the names of the drowned and the quick.

Of course, all this had been already telegraphed by the thoughtful mate, but not in sufficient detail to satisfy. For the pompous person required such personal detail that he kept all hands standing around long after they should have been enjoying their well-earned rest. And at length the course of his inquisition reached Coomer Ali.

"And this man?" asked the pompous one of the tired mate.

"Oh, a stowaway—but I made him earn his passage."

Pomposity licked its lips.

"Stowaway, eh! Got to stop it! Complaints all the time! What do you mean by it?"

This last in the vernacular to the glowering Coomer Ali, who had just seen his aged parent making rapid tracks for distant parts after selling the family dingey for a song.

And the once-prophet—in whom all fear of Hindu or Mohammedan enemies had been smothered by the fear of God instilled in him by the driving mate—explained, but not as politely as he might have done, since he was too eager to get to his parent to be careful of his words, while he resented his detention.

"So you say your father hid you on board this *ag*-boat?"

"Yes, *sahib*."

"Why?"

Coomer Ali gazed frantically as his father waved a derisive farewell from a rapidly moving *gharry*, throwing over his shoulder some words Pomposity did not catch.

"All right, then; I suppose you wanted to go to Rangoon. Stowaways are just thieves, and the law treats them as such."

He spoke to his attending policeman, who laid unkind hands on the dismayed prophet.

"How—for why do you hold me?"

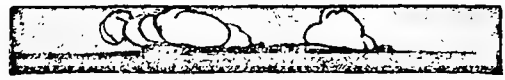
"For the jail," explained the official.

"Oh, I say," broke in the mate, "the poor devil did enough work to pay his passage twice over!"

"Can not be helped," asseverated Pomposity. "I am but the instrument of the law, and the law must take its course."

"But I do not desire to go to jail," wailed Coomer Ali, who was a much changed person.

"No man ever did," answered the official; and Coomer Ali was too upset to contradict him.



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Heart of the Yankee

By Barry Scobee

Author of "The Rawhiders," "The Steer Branded Murder," etc.

YOU Yankees, *señor*, are chicken-hearted. You are easy marks. Have I not witness' it many times? Excuse me, *señor*, present company is except', as you *Americanos* say. You are my frien'. But in Texas and in my own Mexico have I witness' it many times, this chicken heart. Only las' week——

Oh, la-la! I am glad to have this to tell you, this record that Nathan North make himself. It is proof of what I say to you that the Yankees are weak in the knees, that they do not finish what they start. I am ver' glad to sit in this happy little club in San Antonio—is it not, *señor?*—and narrate of Nathan North and the manner in which his great beeg anger turn, *fouff!* into chicken heart.

It surprize' me. This Nathan North, he is a beeg man, red of face. He has many guns and he shoots too straight. He is of strength. I think he can take in his two hands a—baseball bat and kill six men.

Me, I see him one day fight a bull. He desire to drive it into a corral. The bull, he possess a mind of his own and refuse to enter. This North, he arm himself with a neck-yoke of a wagon—you know?—and they fight. La-la, such a prize-fight.

North is victorious. By himself he force that animal to enter the corral. I think he is brave like the *matador*. But again when he have a man at his mercy he turn chicken heart. No courage. It is ver' funny. I tell you.

This North is a herdsman. The man, his enemy, is a nomad. You understand, *señor?* Since our ancestors long ago quit the chase after the fleet deer and the musk-ox and began to herd the cattle, they, the herdsmen, and the nomads have been enemies. Is it not so?

The nomads do not settle permanently. They travel from one place to another. They get what they can, skim the cream, and go on to some other place.

So the herdsmen and the nomads do not admire each other. They are enemies from the beginning, like the dog and the cat. They do not think the same way. North is a herdsman and his enemy is a nomad and they——

I am witness to the affair, *señor*, because I am interest' in the whitestone quarry of the mountains, as you know of your own knowledge. Two weeks ago I travel out to the mountains of southwest Texas, close out by the Big Bend. I want that stone to sell to the building trades. Eet ees on the *rancheria* of Nathan North. He ees too rich. He does not consider the money I would pay for the whitestone.

"No," says he to me and laugh indifferently, "I am too busy with my white faces to bother with this rock."

He refers to his white-faced Hereford

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cattle. He possess' ten, fifteen thousand, and when they graze in long rows across that sunny grassland they look like skirmish lines of soldiers.

It is curious. That big North is so chicken-heart, and yet the gringos—pardon—the *Americanos*—fight so so bear-cat at Château-Thierry. Sometimes I think and think, and I think I am crazy.

And land! In my Mexico the ranches are long and wide. By them the English estates and the German barons' pastures would feel most insignificant.

But yet the *rancheria* of this Nathan North is of a beegness. Three hundred and fifty square miles. He tell me that, but to assure myself that he is not—making a mistake, I go to the keeper of the land-records, the county clerk, and I see for myself by count that North has three hundred and fifty-*seven* sections. Oh la-la, had I half so much, or a quarter, I would not bother with the whitestone!

Do you know, *señor*, how he got so much land? He tell me. In the early days his father settle there and take up land by the square mile. You know, when the republic of Texas give herself to—what shall I say?—Uncle Sam's harem of sister States, she hang on to the public domain to sell for her own enrichment. Ver' wise.

So this old North buy his land from Texas at first. Then when it is settled and there is no more, he buy from other settlers who have patented their holdings.

In later years the son, Nathan, inherit these holdings and keep on adding to them by buying out other ranchmen. When he has bought all he can get hold of, what does he do? He builds a barbed-wire fence around it.

Now, *señor*, observe what I saw with the closeness you would watch the manipulator of a shell game. This is why Nathan North flame into a fine beeg killing rage:

WITHIN his barbed-wire fence that is more than one hundred miles long are sections of six hundred forty acres that no man ever settled on or patented. They were overlooked. Or they were lost on the lease-lists at the land-office. Or the ranchman missed them on his tax-lists and they reverted back to the State.

You understand? There are many ways by which sections of land may be lost in the shuffle and the herdsman not be any the wiser until a nomad comes along and discovers them. Then it is too late. The herdsman must pay.

The nomads, *señor*, have keen eyes for these lost sections of grazing-land. They travel in from the east and the north and when they arrive in the big ranch country they make it a special business to watch the county land-records.

Now and then a notice from the State office reaches the county clerk saying that So-and-so has failed to pay taxes on a certain section, or has overlooked his lease or purchase requirements. . . . Oh, true. The county clerk will inform the ranchman, but before he does so the nomad may have filed on the "vacant" section himself. He is very keen in such matters and acts quickly

Or it may be that some inferior clerk in the county office wants a slice of the pie and will secretly inform the nomad that such-and-such a section has been thrown back into the public domain. In whatever manner the nomad finds out about the land, he hurries and files on it. It of course is included within the ranchman's fence.

So the nomad then sells it to the ranchman for a big sum of money. He says to the ranchman:

"You buy my section of land that I have taken up, or I will put a fence around it. Then if your cattle break through my fence I will sue you."

The cattle will break through, *señor*. In this respect they are as inconsiderate as goats. The ranchman will be sued, perhaps time and again. He knows this. It is annoying. So, to avoid himself the trouble, he say right off:

"How much you want for your section?"

"Thousand dollars," answer the nomad, or maybe he say more. The herdsman pay. He calls it a hold-up.

Such nomads are called bonus-hunters. Oh la-la, *señor*, their number is legion in the southwestern cattle country.

Well, now here is the pity. This beeg man North, he is not so old. He is a bachelor. He has peons to blast stone from the mountains and fine builders to erect for him a splendid house of many rooms and hard floors. So ver' fine.

Outside the stone walls are gray-purple and clean and have the charm. It cost maybe thirty, maybe forty thousand

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dollars. I do not know. He make it so fine because, I s'pose, he think some day he find a *señorita* of class here in San Antonio or El Paso for a wife.

This house, it is in a very beautiful place which he choose after a long time of looking at his hills and valleys. From his front gallery can be seen mountains to the east and south and west, with many level sunny valleys in between. A sweep of seventy miles has he there for a front yard to look at every day.

Also he erect a corral with big sheds, and two big water-tanks for irrigation, and a garage big for five cars, and he make a terrace with steps of the whitestone, and plant the Bermuda for green lawns. It is too lovely out far from town and the railroad and should be in Mexico City. A general would be most certain to—acquire it there.

What then? When I am there, *señor*, to buy this quarry of whitestone we sit on the front gallery the third day and converse, and as we sit we observe a wagon approaching on the road. When it comes close we see that it is a rickety—what you call prairie yacht, drawn by two scraggly bay horses whose bones stick out.

In the seat is one lone man. He stop on the driveway at the foot of the winding whitestone stairway, climb down and strides up toward us. We see that he is an ugly man, not of class. He has a red stubbly beard and is squat and beastly powerful. Up he swaggers, and Señor North rises and says:

"Howdy do, sir. My name is North. Will you come up and sit with us in the shade of the gallery?"

Oh la-la, such courtesy to one not of his class! The man reply:

"Business before pleasure. My name is Pooley—Har Pooley. I have filed on this section of land where your house is."

North laughs kindly.

"You are making a mistake, Mr. Pooley. I have owned this section ten years."

"You think you have," Pooley retorted, and spat off to one side in a crude way. "This was a lost section. You've not knowed about it a tall."

My host is startle'.

"You're crazy," he says.

"Maybe so," Pooley grins, "but I've filed on this section where your house is. You've got so much land a lost section ain't nothin' in your life. But it jist happens, mister, you've built on a section nobody ever owned. It's mine now and I've come to take possession."

North stands there breathing hard like a wrestler and glaring at Red Stubble. Red Stubble glares back with a snarl on his lips. I recall how my host manhandled the bull with the neck-yoke the day before and I look for him to spring upon the squat stranger. But he turns to me presently and says—

"Come, Losoya, we will go into Blue Mountain and look into this."

He leaves Pooley standing there and runs down the steps to the roadster standing on the driveway. I follow him rapidly. We jump in and he, what you say, steps on the gas, and make that car travel. Bump, bump, bump.

He do not talk. He is much disturb'. His tough red face is longer than ever and as hard as the stone. Only once do he speak.

"I would kill a man before I lose my new house," he say.

I am apprehensive—not afraid, you understand. But I expect him to break out raving, mad.

PRETTY soon we finish those nine miles and stop at the court-house in Blue Mountain. What this man Pooley say is too true. We find from the county clerk that the section has been missed somehow in the shuffle.

It is just one little odd section of six hundred and two acres overlooked in the vast North ranch. But North has happen' to build his house and corrals on it. That has happen' more than once out in southwest Texas.

The clerk has fail' to inform Señor North, has procrastinated. But the keen nomads, living in town and waiting for just such opportunities, have not failed to make the discovery. Five of them know about the lost section, and they are afraid to file on it, for they know North and fear him.

But this man Pooley is new to the country. He has lately arrived from the Glass Mountains, where he took up a section on another ranch. He says he will file on the place. He is brave. Perhaps he is closer to his inheritance, to the roving bold nomads of old. However it is, the other bonus-hunters stand back and permit him to pluck the golden apple.

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When North hears all these things he is more worried than ever. We go to the office of the sheriff. North tells that officer how Pooley has filed on the land.

"But, sheriff," say he, "that man can't compel me to abandon my house, my corrals, my tanks. If he asks you, Greeley, to put me off, what will you do?"

Sheriff Greeley sits there and looks out the window and whistles a sad little tune and never answers.

"Well?" demands my friend.

"I'll tell you, Nat," the officer answers, "you go back home and try to buy him off. It's the easiest way out. Why, he can compel you to move your house and corrals off if he wants to. Buy him off, Nat."

So in that hard silence we ride back to the ranch. I am ver' uneasy that something will happen, for North's blue eyes glitter. When we arrive at the house Red Stubble rouses from a siesta in a hammock on the gallery.

"You bonus-hunters have got the drop on me," North says to Pooley without any greeting, drawing out a check-book. "How much do you want to clear out?"

A little flicker of a grin touches the red nomad's mouth, and his blue eyes glitter greedily.

"Twenty thousand dollars, Meester North," he says.

"Don't be a fool!"

"Twenty thousand. Not a cent less."

"I won't be held up."

"Twenty thousand."

"You —— skunk!" North roars. "Get out of here!"

He is in such a fever, that big herdsman, that I expect him to spring on Red Stubble with his bare hands.

"Twenty thousand," Pooley reiterates, his beard bristling. "The law is on my side, North. This is my land. You have almost ruined it."

Here he leered and spat over the gallery railing.

"You've put up a house on it and made tanks and corrals and a marble stairway that I don't want. They are in my way. If you won't pay me twenty thousand I will have the court enjoin you to move these things off."

The insolence! To tear down that magnificent house and carry it away stone by stone!

North is too angry. He is quick. He sieze Pooley by the collar and trouser-belt behind and propel him down that long curving stairway, both of them bellowing and cursing every step like two mad bulls. At the foot he runs Red Stubble plump up against the rickety wagon. I am close after them.

When Pooley bumps the wagon North lets go and starts back up the steps, never looking back to see what his enemy will do. His carelessness is magnificent. But I watch Pooley.

He reaches up into the wagon-seat and grips a big pistol, but he does not shoot pointblank as I anticipate. He grinds 'is teeth and waves the gun in a most dangerous way.

When I overtake my host on the stairway I warn him to run. But he doesn't hear me. I feel queer, *señor*, as if a bullet were tickling my back, but North—his courage is incomprehensible in the face of what happened before this regrettable affair closed.

We sit down on the veranda and pretty soon Red Stubble drives his outfit down the hill about a mile distant, where he stops, unhitches, and rides the better of the two poor beasts along the road in the direction of Blue Mountain.

"He has gone for the sheriff," says my host, "to have me put out of my own home. ——'s trumpet, what a pass!"

"It looks as if you will have to pay twenty thousand, my frien'," I say.

He shakes his head and snorts savagely.

"If you need ready cash," I remind him, "I am ready to pay you ten thousand dollars for the whitestone."

"I'm —— if I will!" he retorts. "I won't pay him any such outrageous sum. It's a hold-up. Two thousand and no more."

We sit there on the porch growling and conversing desultorily until the sun is near ready to plunge itself down on the sawtooth mountains in the west, but Pooley nor the officers come in sight along the road. The old housekeeper calls us to supper, and after North has gobbled a few bites he leaves the table and I hear him telephoning to the sheriff. When I enter the living-room, carpeted so deeply with a fine blue rug, I ask him what the news.

"That bonus-hunter went to Greely, just as I thought. Greeley told him to come back here and offer to settle for a fair price."

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THAT night is not comfortable. The daily papers, which a Mexican *vaquero* has brought in from town, are not interesting. There is nobody in the house but my host and myself. The housekeeper and the *vaquero*, her husband, are off in a *jacal*, where they live. The ranch foreman, Steve Albright—you may have heard of him—and the hands are miles away at the old North ranch headquarters stringing fence.

A phone call comes to warn that Pooley and two or three of his feather are seen with their heads in a circle whispering.

My companion is gloomy. He sits in his deep chair silent like a threatening storm. Twice on the wire he talks to neighboring ranchmen, who call to offer themselves and their cowboys, well armed, should the bonus-hunters attempt to take possession. It is the herdsmen standing together against their enemy the nomads.

It is a heavy evening. After a while North gets up abruptly, says, "To —— with 'em," and goes off to bed with a gruff good night to me.

I am uneasy. I do not sleep well. I feel something impending. Many times in that long dark night I am awake wondering if my frien' is to lose his fine house and the irrigation-tanks and fine fields of alfalfa below.

Again I awaken just when daylight say good morning to the night. I rise, dress, and go strolling about, wishing the woman would get to the kitchen to serve me a cup of hot coffee. In the midst of this I look from the front window, and what do you think I behold?

There is Pooley sitting on the top terrace step in the thin morning cold. His back is turned to me, but I know him by his blue-checked shirt and heavy shoulders. I hurry to awaken my host, who loses no time in getting out there.

"Well," he say at once, sitting down near Pooley, "the sheriff wouldn't support you in your absurd claim, would he?"

"No," say Pooley shortly, rubbing his cold hands together, not fast but very tight, for the mountain air cuts like acid.

"You have come to settle, Pooley?" asks North.

"Yes."

"Good! I have made a mistake and must pay for it. I want to be fair to you. This land is not worth two bits an acre, but I will pay you two thousand dollars for your right in it."

"My price is twenty thousand."

"Stranger," North urges, "be sensible. I can spend a half-million fighting you in court."

The man shake his head.

"Listen, Pooley. You needn't lose a day's time holding down this claim. Let your title-claim go by default. I'll get my foreman, Steve Albright, to file on it then and buy from him. You pull out right now and it'll be worth twenty-five hundred to you."

That Red Stubble sit there like a stubborn child and say nothing.

North raises up on his feet to control his annoyance.

"Don't you want to play fair?"

The burly nomad looks away and begins to whistle, insolent.

"I'll make it five thousand," North say in one big plunge.

Pooley continues his tuneless whistling.

"Well?" North demands.

"Twenty thousand is my price." Pooley's ultimatum, it is.

"—— you!" North bellow. "I'll break your neck."

Red Stubble, to avoid North's reaching hands, raises up and steps back, quick as a spring. At the same time he whistles shrilly. *Señor*, it is a signal. I am startle' at what happens. That fellow says, "Look!" and points to the right and left with a swing of his stubby arms. There among the big boulders on each side of the whitestone stairway come to our vision some astonishing apparitions.

First appear rifles, then hands holding them up. Then there rises the owners of the hands, and we see that they are nomads from the town who are Pooley's friends. There are two on each side of us. It is ver' clever strategy! One instant I spend in giving Red Stubble my admiration. North is surround'.

But that is not all.

That fellow points to the rear, and there in the front door of North's fine house stands another nomad with a thirty-thirty gun held ready. I guess he has come through the kitchen and the hall. The house is captured. I tell you.

"If the sheriff won't back me up," say Pooley, "my friends will. Give me your

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word to pay me twenty thousand, or get off my land."

Now my admiration turn from Red Stubble to my host. He ignores the guns and turns to me politely.

"Losoya," he say, "I am sorry this has come up. Please feel free to enter and get your things and take yourself to town in the roadster."

"Not a thing but yo'selves will leave this place," say the red nomad.

"I will stand by you," I tell my frien'.

"All right, then," North snap out. "We'll hike over to the old headquarters and get the foreman and the hands. Pooley, you, if you don't want trouble you'd better be on your way to town when we get back here. We're goin' to be huntin' coyotes."

We turn away and walk down that terrace, past the alfalfa-field and into the open range, going to the old headquarters place four miles away. Pretty soon we look back and see Red Stubble following us on his rickety bay horse.

We put in more than an hour on that trip, for as you know, *señor*, a cowman has feet only to dance on or hold in saddle-stirrups. They are not for walking. Those high boot-heels are wabbly, and my host walk slow. All the time Pooley keeps a half-mile behind us, until he makes certain we are going to the old ranch-house; then he trots his horse and himself back to the big house. He wish to make preparations for not to be shot as a coyote

At the old ranch is Albright and Kick, an American hand; and Juan, a Mexican hand. Other hands are three miles or maybe more distant, fixing fence. North tells these three what has happen', and they are very indignant. They uproar! They curse! They sieze guns and ammunition.

Into my willing hands are shoved a thirty-thirty rifle and a so big automatic pistol, and I am told to fill my pockets with cartridges. We saddle horses and start back. That Kick and Juan are joking—a coyote hunt! An unexpected vacation from stringing wire fence!

WE APPROACH the new house circumspectly, keeping behind a ridge that is sown thick with huge boulders. When we arrive to where we can observe the *hacienda* headquarters we are still five hundred, maybe four hundred, yards away. And what we see is sufficient to enrage us magnificently. *Señor*, this is what hurts our eyes:

Five saddled horse grazing on North's fine Bermuda lawn. Imagine those hoofs cutting that silky surface! North raise his rifle, then lower it.

"No," he say, "I won't cripple a horse because I'd like to drill its owner."

What next? It is unbelievable. Attend! *Señor*, those nomads have ruined that fine clean purple-gray stone house. They have taken black paint and painted in huge ugly letters entirely across the front above the veranda these words—

PAY 20 000 DOLLARS
HURRY OR

Just as I print it out on this old envelope, *señor*. After that "Hurry or" I think they meant to paint "we will do more damage."

"They have ruined my house," North groans. "That is varnish for my automobiles."

"Yuh couldn't get it off that clean stone with sandpaper or dynamite," says Albright.

We kept still for a moment, full of hate.

Pretty soon we descry a man climbing through an upper window on to the front gallery roof. He carry a pail, and it is apparent that he is there to continue his infamous painting.

"He's yours by rights," says Albright in a low voice to North, and lets down the hammer of the gun he had raised.

North is grim. He aims carefully at the painter and fires. It is four hundred yards. North grunts disgustedly, for he miss. But we see the pail of paint fly into the air, and the man climbs hastily through the window back into the house.

"Punctured the pot, anyhow," says Kick.

"Yes," North concede bitterly, "but the varnish will run down off the porch on to the stone steps. ——'s trumpet, anyhow!"

Now, all this happen in maybe ten seconds; then bullets begin to slam on the boulders in front of us and glance whining into the air.

"They're on the job," say Kick.

We look around at him. He is standing there barehead' and with an embarrassed countenance. He stoops and picks up his sombrero, and pokes a thumb through a hole in the crown where one of the bullets has pierce' it. I speak to them.

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"You gentlemen," I say, "please follow my example and keep conceal' behind these thick stones."

They see the wisdom of my suggestion and squat down.

"Now," I offer, "if you permit, Señor North, I will ride down behind this ridge to the road and hurry into Blue Mountain for help. If you think best."

"No," North bites off, "we can settle this. It's a good time to get shut of these bonus-hunters without the sheriff interfering."

"But," I protest, "the courts—the law—prison."

"——'s catoot!" bellows that big foreman in a big round scoffing voice. "Where do you think we are? In Mizzoura or Ioway? They ain't the makin's of a jury between Santa Fé and San Anton' would stick a cowman for bumpin' off that rabble up there. More'n likely we'd get a medal."

I desist. You know how those ranch foreman are, *señor*.

We watch between the boulders, and pretty quick something happens. Pooley—I know by his blue-checked shirt—runs across the hundred-yard open space from the house to the corral. He jumps and drops and stops and leaps so as to dodge the bullets we are firing at him.

As we fire the broadside at him, his friends are pumping lead at us from their hidden positions. Bullets are pinging all around us, yet are we not touched.

Pooley arrives at the corral safely, and is out of sight. In a moment we observe some Hereford bulls being driven from the corral. Ten of them, fine broad fellows. They are blooded stock which North himself has been preparing for the stock shows.

They pause and we see them raise their heads and sniff; then they gallop down the hill. My host swallow hard and say—

"It will kill them."

"What?" I ask.

"The alfalfa."

Then I comprehend. Below the corral is the irrigated alfalfa-field, which is watered from the tanks above on the hillside. These fine bulls, unused to the rich green alfalfa, will make themselves injury by gorging on the greenery. It is a mean trick for Red Stubble to do.

"It is sabotage—blackmail," I say to my host.

"It is," he agrees with me. "He knows we are here seeing everything he does. Painting the house, pasturing my lawn, turning my bulls out—he's putting on the pincers to hurry up that twenty thousand. Well—he's sawing lumber for his coffin."

In a short time the bulls are pushing through the flimsy wire fence around the hay-field.

"We'd better get a hustle on and do something," suggests Albright.

"Go over the top," says Kick.

"I've got a plan," Señor North tells us quietly. "Listen, then get busy. My outfit's worth a half-million, and I'll protect one or all of you in court to the last nickel if necessary.

"Steve, you take Juan and work your way across the bottom there and get on the other slope. Kick, you stay right here and pot any man that gets away from his cover. Losoya, you can stay with Kick or you can come with me. I'm going up close to the corral. I'm going there to kill Pooley."

"I'll go and witness it," I say, thinking it proper to stay by my host.

So we separate at once. North leads the way behind the ridge toward the corral. We are careful not to expose ourselves. It is a bad journey, for all the time I expect one of those nomads to rise up from behind a boulder and fire at us pointblank.

North never speaks a word. He is grim, like a ranger. I have a moment of sorrow for Pooley.

An accident happens to us before we have gone far. North slips on a loose stone and falls with his gun against a boulder and bends the barrel slightly. I hand him my thirty-thirty rifle.

"Spare me some ammunition," he says, opening the magazine and seeing that I have emptied the piece when firing at Pooley.

I hand him a palmful of cartridges from my pockets.

"These," says he, "are for your pistol."

I find then that in my excitement at the old ranch-house I have got only pistol cartridges. We are in a fix, for now the thirty-thirty is useless, and North's gun, which is a bigger and heavier rifle, is out of order. We have only the pistol, and this I pass to my frien'.

In twenty minutes, perhaps, we arrive at the comb of the ridge and can look down upon the corral and the sheds inside.

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Pooley is not in sight, but our attention is grasped by something that is happen'.

A STREAM of water is running down the hill.

"That skunk!" North exclaims. "He has opened the gate to my big water-tank and the water is wasting. If that isn't stopped in ten minutes the alfalfa-field will dry up."

The herdsman's face has been hard like rock. Now it flames red except at the temples, under the broad rim of the hat, where it is green-white. I know now with certainty that Red Stubble is to die.

It hurts me, *señor*, to see that stream of water foaming white down the hill, going to waste. What mental pain my frien' must be suffering!

He takes the big black pistol in his right hand and says to me:

"Losoya, I am going into the corral to find that coyote. If I had a rifle I'd stay here and pick him off—but I haven't. You can come or stay, as you please. Better stay back though, without a gun."

With that he stride off, keeping behind the boulders as best he could. I follow, to be at the finish.

Presently the boulders are no more, and we are compelled to run across an open space. We imitate Red Stubble in our corkscrew flight across that unsheltered belt, and arrive safely at the corral fence with only a sprinkle of shots fired at us.

North strides through the pens, swinging the heavy wooden gates. The black pistol is gripped tight. So beeg wrath!

I follow on his heels. We watch keenly. We enter a shed. The red nomad is not there. We pass out and go around a corner of the shed.

We pause to listen. There is a sound in the next shed, like the rustling of dry hay. We tiptoe forward and peer in at the open door.

Señor, the inventiveness of that Pooley is remarkable, for what do you think he has thought of now to hurry up North with the twenty thousand dollars? Fire. He is preparing to set fire to the shed. With his booted feet he is raking together the loose hay on the concrete floor of the shed.

In his left hand is his rifle, gripped by the barrel. In the fingers of his right hand is a match. His back is to us, and he does not hear us because of the rustle of the dry hay.

Pooley bends forward and strikes the match on his boot-sole.

North, smooth and quick like a cat, steps forward, his pistol held out to shoot. I expect every half-second to hear the gun roar and to see Pooley fall.

But this is the puzzle. Now, when North can shoot that fellow without danger, what does he do? He stops and says—

"Don't fire that hay, you!"

Pooley spins round to face us, startled.

I see North's object now. He wants Pooley to see the death that awaits him. He wants that fellow to look into the eye of the pistol and know how he is to die.

Red Stubble—what coolness! He grins sheepishly and *calmly* blows out the match-flame. North is ready to pull the trigger.

Now, you may not believe what I tell you. . . . Something happen' at this moment which I have observe' before in the gringo—*Americanos*. It happen' when your Pershing is in Mexico. It happen' when your Funston comes to Veracruz. They do not finish. Hear me, *señor;* they—do—not—finish.

Now observe what this North does. There stand Pooley. He can not shoot quickly enough to get North. All North must do is pull the trigger and a heavy bullet will spatter Pooley's face. Pooley will be no more. But instead North speak—

"Will you leave my place, Pooley?" he ask.

Red Stubble shrugs his heavy shoulders and laugh unhappily and say—

"You got the drop on me."

"Will you get out?" North repeat.

"I will—for two thousand dollars, your own offer."

What insolence! What courage for that nomad! He drop his rifle down on the little heap of hay.

"For two thousand dollars I go," he repeat. "You promise that yourself."

North put his pistol in his hip pocket. He walk slow, with bowed head, to the door of the shed and stare down at the rocky ground.

But he do not see. He think. Then pretty soon he have make up his mind. I do not know then what it is he decide. He turn back to Pooley.

"If I give you a check for two thousand dollars," he ask, "will you call off your men, relinquish this land and take the

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road down the valley to town at once?"

"Right away quick," say Pooley, "seein' you have the drop on me. Down the road and over to town, if you say."

North take a check-book from his inside coat pocket and write a check for two thousand dollars and hand it to Red Stubble.

"There," he say, "I promise you that and I make my promise good."

"But," Pooley protest', regarding the paper, "this is made out to the old woman —Mrs. H. Pooley."

"Your wife and children can use the money," North tell him.

"Not if I'm free and in my right mind," the man retort with a grin.

The nomad carelessly crams the check into his front shirt pocket and takes up his rifle. He say—

"Walk out of the corral with me so your men won't shoot, and I will call off my friends."

North does so, and no shots are fired. Pooley go toward the big house.

THAT check, *señor*. North did not have to pay it. Why did he not kill that Pooley? He possess a great beeg mad wrath, that North. He swear, so coldly, that he will kill Red Stubble.

He could have kill' him with safety. And he have sufficient cause to kill him. But why did he not pull the trigger?

I will tell you, *señor*. It is the gringo chicken heart. So far and no farther can the gringos go. It is their chicken heart.

Yet—Château-Thierry. . . I think and think, and sometimes I think I am crazy. . . .

But it is the gringo who's crazy. But observe; see how the Yankee have his way. It is a way I do not comprehend, since North could have shot Pooley.

When Red Stubble start to the house to call off his men my host lead the way through the gates we entered. I follow. We walk in plain sight on the comb of the ridge, going back to where we separated from Albright and the other men. North wave his hat for them to assemble. North then turn down behind the ridge out of sight from the house, and say, quick and sharp:

"Follow me now! Run like the devil was on your shirt-tail!"

And we do run in that manner for a time. After a while we settle down to a trot, and presently we come breathless to where Kick and that foreman and Juan await us.

"You are some diplomat," Albright say, looking hard at North, not knowing what to think about the victory.

"I bought 'em off with a two-thousand-dollar check," my host explain.

Kick grunt. The foreman grunt. Juan express his disgust by a heavy shrug.

North points along the valley road.

"There they come now," he say, and we see them riding in a group toward us, their rifles across their saddles.

"I and Señor Losoya," my frien' go on, "have come down here so we can all go together and tell them good-by. Come on, men. We'll get down to the road by the time they arrive."

"Shoot into 'em?" Albright ask', brightening.

"No!" snap North. "You boys just keep your shirts on. Hear me?"

He lead the way and we follow, all on our horses now, that we left behind the high boulders. Albright is so sullen. Kick whistles dolorously. Juan is blank of face. By and by we are at the road, and coming just so far off as we can hear their saddles squeak are the six nomads, two abreast and Pooley in the lead, all watching us.

"Good-by, brothers," Kick calls out, and laughs bitterly so North can hear.

My herdsman keeps looking at them. When they arrive abreast of us, their horses walking slow, Pooley turn in his saddle and point' back with one arm.

"There's yo' house, *Mister* North," he say. "I gives it to you. Go up and take it. And *if* you can wash the carriage-paint off o' it, why it'll look *might*' near new."

The nomad laughs tauntingly. The others grin.

"Pull up, Pooley," North invite quietly. "I have something to say to you."

"Be quick," Pooley say impudently as they stop their horses. "I'm in a hurry to cash my check."

"Your wife will attend to that," my host declare. "When I gave it to you I had thought of something that I reckon you ain't thought of.

"This land you could file on and take. But my property you can't take without due process of law. Due process there hasn't been.

"You come here and damage my property and shoot at me and my men when we

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try to defend it. Pooley, there isn't a jury in the Southwest but will send you and your rascals to the penitentiary for fifty years for this."

Now, I do not see what takes place, it is so sudden. But I see the effect. It is North's big automatic pistol pointing at those nomads. Their hands go above their shoulders, high up. They are astonish' and ver' pale in the face.

"Disarm them!" North orders, and that big foreman and Kick take their guns.

"Now," barks North, "turn your horses toward the sheriff's office and travel."

We fall in behind.

That is all, *señor*. The sheriff receives them. They will go to the pen.

But the Yankee chicken heart—la-la! When that big herdsman could have shot and kill' that Red Stubble!

SITTING BULL'S SIOUX AND THE TELEPHONE

by **E. A. BRININSTOOL**

A FEW years after Sitting Bull had fled to Canada, following the Custer massacre, a band of his discontented ones drifted back across the boundary-line into Montana on a thieving expedition. This was about 1880. Down around Tongue River the hostiles were surprized in a deep ravine and finally forced to surrender to Capt. Snyder. Information was then sent to the balance of the band that the captured braves would be retained as prisoners until the others came in and also surrendered.

Following this summons eight warriors from Sitting Bull's camp came in under a flag of truce to ascertain the terms of surrender. The Indians were treated nicely at Fort Keogh, then in command of Gen. Nelson A. Miles of the Fifth Infantry, and it was decided to impress upon these savages the superior greatness of the white man.

Fort Keogh was equipped with telegraph service, and a telephone system had also been inaugurated. When the Indians were told that the simple little clicking instrument was used to talk directly to the Great Father at Washington by means of tiny little flashes of light which traveled over the wires, the Indians looked their disbelief. The telegraph key was worked for their satisfaction in a darkened room in order that they might understand as near as possible the means of communication, but they shook their heads doubtfully.

Finally four of the Indians were taken an eighth of a mile away to the house of the commander, while the others were left in company with an officer at the fort telegraph headquarters where the 'phone was fastened to the wall. Then the commander's house was called up and one of the warriors was induced to talk through the instrument to one of his companions at the other end.

The effect was astounding. The savages recognized each other's voices so clearly that they were unmistakably convinced that the sound had passed through the wire. While holding the receiver to the ear the Indians trembled violently, their hands shook as if with the palsy and great drops of perspiration rolled down their faces. After the talking was finished they laid down the instrument with awe and wonder, appearing to be as deeply affected as if in the presence of the Great Spirit himself. Of course they were unable to explain or understand anything about the instrument, but they unqualifiedly expressed the belief that a spirit was in the little box guiding their words to each other.

After the Indians were united again at the telegraph office, they held a whispered consultation and then gave the telephone a remarkable name. They christened it the "whispering spirit."

When they returned to their camp in Canada it is needless to say they were fully convinced of the white man's power and magic, and in strong terms urged the immediate surrender of the entire band, and through the influence of this "whispering spirit" talk, more than two thousand warriors surrendered and came in at Fort Keogh, where they remained peaceable, contented and industrious until removed to an agency on the lower Missouri, never again being allowed to return to the upper country which they and their ancestors had occupied for hundreds of years.

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The Pirate And the Colonel

By J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Dragon's Claw," "Death's Carpenter," etc.

THE wharf loungers of Charles Town surveyed the swift approach of the long-boat up the harbor with an apathy bred of constitutional laziness and the climate of South Carolina. Without doubt the bronzed, bearded, gaudily clad seamen who manned the oars with a vigor that was almost distressing to the onlookers were pirates, but Charles Town had seen pirates before.

Partly from a desire to propitiate as well as profit, partly because of the popular revolution simmering within the Province—which was within the year to change it from proprietary to royal rule; a condition that blocked all of Governor Robert Johnson's attempts to secure a creditable and serviceable navy—Charles Town winked at the doings of the buccaneers with one eye while the other noted the broad pieces flung on the counters of shop and tavern by the Brethren of the Coast. So long as Charles Town was unmolested why bother about what happened in the Caribbean?

It was seven miles to the open sea from the head of the peninsula and the pirates must have rowed at least that distance, for there was barely breeze enough to rustle the palmettos and stir the bearded moss on the live-oaks; yet the men pulled with a dash that bowed the ashen staves of their long oars and sent white patches of aerated brine floating astern at regular intervals to mark the perfection of their stroke.

Two rowers sat to a thwart, twelve oars in all, a reckless, mind-seared and body-scarred lot who feared neither God, devil nor the hangman; white men, yellow men, brown and black, stripped to their waists, with the sweat coursing down bearded chests and corded arms and shining on their grinning faces. Their belt-sashes bristled with knives and pistols; their breeches were thrust into high boots of soft leather; their heads were bound with kerchiefs of brilliant silk under which gold earrings jerked to the rhythm of the stroke.

Astern sat two of higher rank, as grades go among freebooters. One, at the tiller, was resplendent in purple velvet heavily laced with gold.

The skirted coat was open on account of the heat and showed cross-belts to which holsters were attached, holding four pistols, and where the leathers met a socket in which was a knife with an ivory handle, the top of the grip carved to the semblance of a skull.

The man's face was a horror. Some wasting fever had stripped it once and for all of all spare tissues. The skin was pitted from smallpox and stretched over the bones drumhead tight. Out of it bristled black eyebrows, mustache and curling beard

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though the pate beneath the plumed and braided cocked hat was bald as an egg. His oblique eyes, almost Chinese, were black and glittering as jet, his mouth an almost lipless gash that, when it opened, showed yellow teeth, apart and pointed.

His companion was dressed in somber black cloth, touched with silver. His boots were of black leather and a black feather curled in his hat-brim. His face, dark as mahogany from the weather, was clean-shaven; a grim face, lined heavily, in which a pair of pale-blue eyes seemed strangely staring. His coat was buttoned, and no weapon showed but the hanger set between his legs.

"Way enough!" shouted the man at the tiller.

The oars went up to perpendicular with a man-of-war precision, a pirate in the bows clawed at the string-piece with a boat-hook and another tossed the painter-coil to a negro, who made it fast to a ring-bolt as the long-boat glided alongside the wharf and the two men in the stern rose and leaped nimbly ashore.

"Wait till ye get the signal or until we return," commanded the skull-faced man. "I'll send ye something from the tavern to pass the time and wet your whistles. Come on, Cummings, let's get this business over with, or we'll have to pull back against the flood."

WHILE the rabble daringly bandied gossip with the seamen the two went with a swagger and a deep-sea roll past the warehouses, up new-named King Street to the triangular common with the tavern at its blunted apex and the Council-House at its base. Outside the inn, on whose sign the head of George the First now covered that of Queen Anne—four years dead—were tables and benches on the grass of the common, shaded by great live-oaks.

The skull-faced man elbowed his way through the curious, kicked aside a dog, frowned away two countrymen with their tankards from the table he fancied, drew one of his pistols and discharged it as an unnecessary signal for the landlord, who, shirt-sleeved and short-aproned, was already on his obsequious way to serve.

"Hollands, fresh limes, sugar, chilled water!"

"Right away, my gentlemen. You'll mix your own toddies? Aught else? There is a fresh roast of beef. A cheese? Peaches? Some tobacco from Mr. Perrin's warehouse?"

"A murrain on your tongue," said skull-face with such a look in his eyes that the landlord's smile wilted. "Bring what ye are told. And send a john of rum to the boat. That and a messenger. I have a word for the council. And make speed."

He emphasized his order by pounding the table-top with the butt of his pistol, and the tavern-keeper scurried away while both the pirates broke into a loud guffaw. A maid came hurrying with a tray bearing the order, followed by a tapster with a trencher on which were set the spurned roast, the cheese, bread, the peaches and a tobacco-jar.

"With the compliments of the house, sirs," said the tapster.

The maid set down the contents of the tray, courtesied and turned crimson as the skull-faced man caught her by her skirts, drew her to him, held her chin between thumb and fingers and leered at her. The tapster's hands balled in impotent, jealous fury.

"A fair wench, Cummings," said the pirate. "I like 'em *blond*, as Demoulin styles it. Look ye, Kate or what your name may be, art minded to quit this shore life and come to sea for a spell? You shall be queen of the ship, I promise ye, laden with silks and gewgaws."

The girl tore herself loose and ran for the tavern while the tapster, stared down by the pirate, slowly followed her.

"Hark ye, tapster!" the buccaneer cried after him. "If the lass changes her mind there is a welcome for her aboard the *Royal James*. She has but to ask for Supercargo Maynard to be assured attention."

The convulsed face of the tapster blanched a little and there was a stir at all the tables. The *Royal James* was the ship of Blackbeard, the pirate who had traded his soul to the devil and whose notoriety was first only to that of his supercargo.

The landlord came bustling out again, servile yet covetous.

"You have what ye wish, gentlemen. I myself will bear your message to the council."

Maynard and Cummings kept him waiting while they mixed their toddies and swallowed them, conscious of the stillness that proclaimed ears agog for their message.

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"Our boat is at the landing," condescended Maynard finally. "Let there be conveyed to it all manner of apothecary's supplies in full ship's quantity. Lint, aloes, quinin, spirits of niter, purges.

"Cummings has the list. He is our surgeon, as quick to heal a wound as I am to make one. As deft to trim a limb as I am to lop one. Our chirurgeon, our blood-letter, though, egad, we are all blood-letters aboard the *Royal James;* eh, Cummings?"

He roared at his jest as the surgeon took a folded paper from his skirt pocket and handed it to the landlord.

"This to the apothecary's? And to the council?" asked the taverner.

"*That* to the council, you shallow-brained clown. In haste. Tell them we need the stuff for the speedy relief of certain guests of ours who are afflicted with an affection of the throat that may be fatal; eh, Cummings?"

The surgeon smiled grimly. The landlord had glanced at the paper.

"But, gentlemen, I doubt——"

"What do you doubt, fool?"

The landlord had shrewdly doubted whether the merchants of Charles Town would countenance the sending of drugs aboard the pirate ship. To sell them liquor, to buy cheap wine and silks, was one thing; to supply them with medicines was another. That was to abet the pirate's trade.

And there had been murmurs of late among the conservatives who had backed the governor's cry for a navy to curb these freebooters, murmurs that cried shame on the merchants for trading bloody guineas with such murderous hands on any consideration. However, the landlord did not voice his thought, but twisted it.

"I doubt if there be these many drugs in all Charles Town. And the council——"

"There had better be," said Maynard. "Look ye, landlord, do you happen to know one Samuel Wragg and perchance his son?"

"Know him?" stuttered the man, struck by a sinister note in Maynard's voice. "Aye, I know both of them well. They have but lately gone to England in the merchantman *Good Fortune* with other prominent citizens of Charles Town. Some have their families with them," he stammered on.

"The *Good Fortune* has met with bad luck," said Maynard. "Samuel Wragg and the rest have changed their minds. They have changed their ship and their destination. They are now aboard the *Royal James*. They are the persons who have an affection of their throats that may be fatal. As to their destination, it depends much upon the condition of their souls.

"Get you to your council, fool," he thundered. "If those drugs are not aboard our boat before the tide turns Blackbeard will send ashore the heads of Samuel Wragg and your other prominent citizens on the tail of the flood, packed in sawdust in Samuel Wragg's own trunk, which is now empty!"

He gazed around at the horrified listeners, who leaned forward with pale faces, glued to their seats, limbs and minds paralyzed by the threat. The landlord's face turned from its veiny purple to a ghastly gray. He essayed the travesty of a smile.

"You jest, sir, of course. But——"

The next second he leaped high in the air. The bullet from a second pistol had plowed the turf between his shoes.

"My next jest may be better aimed," said Maynard. "Let that speed you."

WITHIN the minute the common was cleared opposite the tavern. Women and children disappeared as if by magic. Groups of men gathered and dispersed with the news while the landlord fled toward the Council-House and the two pirates attacked the viands and brewed themselves fresh toddies.

At Council-House the members, summoned by the secretary, blustered and trembled. A messenger was sent on horseback to the governor. Yet they knew themselves helpless. The threat was not to be discounted.

In the apothecaries' shops masters and apprentices ransacked their stores to fill the order. Before the tide turned the longboat, towing a pinnace laden with the preempted supplies and destined to bring back the prisoners, pulled out to sea, the drunken pirates yelling out a chantey of the Main.

As the sunset failed and lights twinkled in the town, the returning pinnace, scarce half a foot of free-board showing, crowded with men and women, with Samuel Wragg and "other prominent citizens" toiling clumsily at the oars, guided by lanthorns on the wharf, came slowly alongside the landing, and Samuel Wragg confronted the governor.

"A fine outrage, sir!" he cried. "We have

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barely saved the honor of our women and the lives of all. We looked to see some reprisal afoot, to pass a sloop sent in pursuit of this bloody villain. At the least a craft to bring us safely in.

"What, sir, is the blood frozen in the veins of all Charles Town? Your own niece, Robert Johnson, your own niece seized by this Blackbeard! Are we all cowards?

"At least we fought as well as we could aboard the *Good Fortune*. Fired and scuttled, that good ship, sir. Gone to the bottom with seventeen of her defenders and her cargo loot to Blackbeard."

"'Tis your own faults," answered the governor. "Had ye but stood by me with the council when I asked for ships, and money to pay the crews, there would have been none of this. As we stand, Charles Town is open, helpless under the threats and guns of every marauding pirate and privateer."

"You are responsible, sir. You are the governor," retorted Wragg. "There is one man, I'll warrant ye, who would not have suffered this outrage to go unpunished. Why did you not call on him? He can not be in the town; or else you have refused to give him hearing."

"You mean, sir?" asked the huffed but humbled governor, sensible of the rising spirits and the murmurs of the crowd gathered to meet the pinnace.

"Who should I mean, sir, but Colonel William Rhett? Where is he?"

A young man pressed forward.

"The colonel is up-river, at his plantation. By now he should have heard. I sent a man."

There was the clatter of a horse's hoofs upon the timbers of the landing. The crowd divided, holding up lanthorns toward a spare man, sitting upright on a gray horse, a man of about fifty, in riding-clothes powdered with dust, his mount's flanks heaving, its head hanging from weariness.

"Colonel Rhett is here, sir," said the newcomer in a crisp voice. "Is that you, Mr. Wragg? I have come post on the news of this outrage. But this is no place to discuss it.

"Governor, let us make appointment with these gentlemen who have suffered to meet them at your mansion after they have sent their ladies home and refreshed themselves from their experience. And let the crowd go home also."

TWO sloops stood out from Charles Town harbor and, hauling on the wind, sailed north toward Cape Fear and the rumored rendezvous of Blackbeard. This, according to the latest information, was in a river-mouth behind the Cape where Blackbeard occasionally refitted and whither he had gone after his levying on Charles Town.

It had taken three days of utmost energy to outfit and man the two sloops with volunteer sailors and fighters, three days of strenuous driving on the part of Colonel William Rhett, who now stands on the quarter-deck, conversing with the skipper of the *Henry*, while the *Sea-Nymph* slips along on the weather quarter. Both are well armed with pike and musket, with hand-grenades, with boarding-axes, with long eighteens, with bow and stern-chasers that are twenty-twos and with ample supply of round shot and partridge and chain-shot, not forgetting powder.

And the men work quietly; quickly the crews are told off to their guns and are practising on inhaul and outhaul, on ramming home and swabbing out, until the polished tubes of bronze seem like toys in their brawny hands. Colonel Rhett quietly smiles his satisfaction and the skipper gives an order here and an order there, flattening his canvas as the wind shifts a point or two, sending the *Henry* along at eleven good knots while the *Sea-Nymph* holds her own as consort.

A fishing-boat comes offshore, her big, brown sail bellied out before the wind, her captain-owner signaling in the bows with a strip of red cloth. Rhett asks the skipper of the *Henry* a question and returns an order.

The *Henry* shoots into the wind and hangs there. So does the *Sea-Nymph*, while the fisherman comes blundering down, puts over his own tiller and lies rocking close beside the *Henry* as her excited captain bawls his news.

"The bloody pirate—Blackbeard! Took my catch, blast his soul to Satan! Spare him the trouble, says he. An' said if any one come out to look for him you'd find him waitin' back o' Cape Fear. He's a fort two mile up the river an' he's got a lookout atop the Cape. He'll sight ye an' guess ye for what ye are, same as I did."

Rhett, through the speaking-trumpet, calls back:

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"Much obliged to you, captain. I see your name, the *Polly*. If we corner him you'll not lack payment for your news."

He turns to the *Henry's* skipper.

"All right, Mr. Benton. We should make it by an hour after noon."

"The tide will be at ebb," said the skipper as the *Henry* gathered way and the fisherman held out to sea to replenish the hold that Blackbeard had so unceremoniously emptied. "It will be against us."

"And with him," answers the colonel. "So much the better. They tell me this Blackbeard is no coward. Fights like a panther, though he is a bit of a bully. The ebb will bring him to us the quicker.

"Ebb or flood, we must bottle him before he gets out to sea. For the *Royal James*, you tell me, has the heels of us?"

"Aye," replies Captain Benton. "The heels of us and the metal. The odds are even for all we're two to one."

"Which makes the affair much more creditable," says the colonel, and goes below with Benton regarding him admiringly.

COLONEL WILLIAM RHETT was fifty-two and his hair was graying at the temples. He was a tall man, spare and sinewy, with the fire of youth quite often in his eyes and a good deal of the spring and suppleness of young manhood quite often visible in his actions.

His wrist, for one thing, was as supple today as it had been for the past thirty years, as supple, as strong and crafty in fence. His arm was sinewy and his eyes were keen.

Colonel Rhett held fame as a "deft and delicate fencer" and a dangerous duelist, so dangerous that not in all the Province of Carolina was there an antagonist who would not go carefully and speak gently if the matter seemed apt to lead to sword-points—and one of those points the end of the colonel's blade.

The colonel's trade was that of fighting man, but for the past twelve years he had perforce neglected it. In seventeen hundred and six, in the fourth year of the reign of Good Queen Anne and the thirty-sixth year of the settlement of South Carolina, a combined fleet of Spanish and French commodored by one Le Feboure had attacked Charles Town and been most successfully repulsed by Colonel William Rhett, commander-in-chief of volunteer forces under Governor Sir Nathaniel Johnson. Since then the colonel's good sword might have rusted for lack of work had it not been for the care with which the colonel regarded it and his daily bouts at fencing that kept him fit.

A precise man was Colonel Rhett and one who combined dash and the love of danger with attention to details. Nor one given to boasting.

"I shall take pleasure in overtaking and engaging this pirate Blackbeard," he had told the council at Charles Town in his crisp voice when they promised him the sloops, the arms and their sanction. "I have often heard that he claims to be a swordsman of great merit. It is my desire to satisfy myself upon that point especially while duly avenging the slights and indignities set upon the citizens and this town of Charles.

"I doubt not that I shall bring you some personal token of our engagement. The loot that we may capture is, I understand, to be divided in shares between those who suffered in the loss of the *Good Fortune* and the members of this expedition. We shall start within seventy-two hours."

There had been a sparkle in the colonel's eye and his upright figure seemed straighter than usual as he left the Council-House. In the cabin of the *Henry*, after the fisherman's definite news of Blackbeard's challenge, this sparkle still persisted.

The colonel drew on a pair of boots of Spanish leather, thin-soled and perfectly fitting, showing his high instep, of which the colonel was secretly a little proud. In them his feet were gloved rather than shod. His coat was off and his ruffled sleeves of silk were rolled daintily above the elbow and secured with black ribbon, not too tightly.

The flesh on his arms was as soundly elastic as if it had been gutta-percha encasing tendons of steel wire. The muscles played automatically as he picked up his blade, unsheathed upon the table, and bent its tempered steel into a hoop below the hilt, watching it spring back with a smile.

Then he plucked a hair from his head and severed it in the air with the razor edge of the sword as he held it between thumb and finger of his left hand. Next, laying down the weapon, he examined the priming of the pistols in his belt.

"Blackbeard, they tell me," he said half-aloud, "fights with a heavy cutlas. Well, we shall see."

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And he picked up his sword and went on deck. He had left the sheath of the blade in his cabin.

"A scabbard," said Colonel Rhett, "is only useful before and after fighting."

"Captain," he said, "may I recommned that you have plenty of sand ready for the decks? A slippery stance has cost many a man his life.

"And let me suggest that you resin the soles of your boots before we engage. I have ample supply. It makes a great difference in close combat, I assure you."

"He means to board," said the captain to his first aid as the colonel moved forward. "Just the same if we can only get the wind of Blackbeard, and him between us and the *Sea-Nymph*, I'll do my best to cripple him for all his thirty-pounders. Our men 'll do well enough, but those pirates are devils in hand-to-hand work; and they fight with the noose about their necks."

The sloops were skirting the long slant of Long Bay. Smith Island, at the mouth of Cape Fear River, loomed ten miles ahead. In another hour they would be at grips with Blackbeard.

The crews were talking in low voices, their jaws set between words. The reputation of the pirate and all the stories bandied about concerning him passed from mouth to mouth. He sailed boldly under the Jolly Roger, did this sea-ogre with the ferocious eyes, his enormous beard tied up with bits of colored ribbon and his pleasant habit of chewing glass to inspire his men with the conviction that he, Blackbeard, was the original Bad Man of the Spanish Main. He bullied the other pirates and fought like a wildcat. So did his men.

But the men of Carolina were not afraid. On the *Henry* the figure of Rhett, chatting with the captain, using his naked, gleaming sword as a cane for the time being, reassured them.

Blackbeard had gone too far. Next he would be landing where he willed and harrying their crops, their cattle, even their wives and children. So the landsmen who made up a large portion of the force fought seasickness in the long chop of the offshore seas and, realizing that there would be no quarter asked or offered in his fight, resolved to acquit themselves manfully.

Off Smith Island the two sloops headed in close-hauled for the estuary, decks sanded, matches lit, powder at hand, the guns shotted, fighting the tail of the ebb up the river. And Blackbeard, never yet known to refuse a challenge, warned by his lookout, ordered the Skull and Bones to the truck and came booming down the river with current, wind and tide to meet them.

Nearer and nearer they came together closing in, until the round shot began to fly, skimming the water, plunging through the canvas, splintering the sides of the vessels and furrowing the decks. The *Henry* was in the lead, the *Sea-Nymph* backing up, unable as yet to bring anything but her bow gun into action for fear of hitting her consort.

Blackbeard's crew yelled as the *Royal James* came on. They were half-drunk and half-naked and they had no doubt of the issue. Blackbeard, on the quarter-deck, roared out commands and cursing pleasantries. To go surging past the sloops, one after the other, to pour a heavy broadside into them, to bring down some spars, to get free to the open sea and, with that once at the back of them, to come ramping in again and fight the sloops at long range until the slack of the tides left them within the estuary bar, to be bombarded or boarded after dark as he pleased; that was the game.

"We'll teach 'em!" he roared, his words interlarded with oaths. "We'll teach the shopkeeping, counter-jumping swabs to threaten us. Hull 'em, hull 'em as we pass! Never mind their sticks now, blast ye!"

The *Royal James* had the better of this game so far. Struggling against the tide and the breeze, the *Henry* and the *Sea-Nymph* were much like two none-too-heavy backs seeking to stop a star runner as he charges for the goal. Yet the duel seemed up till now to have been fairly equal. There were losses on both sides, blood sopped up by the sand on the sloops' decks, men below in the surgeons' care a shot or so between wind and water; but the engagement had been too swift, the range too quickly changing, for much accuracy.

The pirate ship was within pistol range of the *Henry*. Colonel Rhett could see her rail crowded with men, the menace of her carronades in the yawning ports, ready to give them a broadside, buccaneers in the rigging with muskets and pistols, Blackbeard on his quarter-deck with his whiskers black against a shirt of vermilion silk.

And their own return broadside was not half the caliber. It was on the cards that

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Blackbeard might first cripple them and find time with his expert crew to reload and give the *Sea-Nymph* the same treatment.

BLACKBEARD raised a trumpet to his lips and the hoarse yell of his voice reached Rhett distinctly.

"A taste of your own medicine, ye landlubbers. I'll blow ye to —— already scorched!"

At twenty yards, with both opponents closing in, the *Sea-Nymph* seemed to be in some trouble. Another minute or so and other boats would reel from the discharge of their guns. Rhett considered a desperate chance of grappling and boarding as they passed, but the captain shook his head.

"If he don't blow us out of the water," he said, "and the *Sea-Nymph* can hold him, we'll come about and get him between two fires. And I'll be glad to get out of this, for the tide is racing out. I fear the *Sea-Nymph* is aground. Ah!"

There was a shudder along the hull of the sloop, a shiver of her mast, and then she heeled over to port at a smart angle. And, ten yards away, the *Royal James* was stranded on the falling tide, sandbanked, her decks angled as were the *Henry's!* But there was this difference. Blackbeard's ship, careening, showed her bottom to the sloop, which exposed her deck to the pirate's starboard battery.

At Rhett's command the men of Charles Town let go one broadside from their port battery even as the muzzles slanted down and, hissing, kissed the water before they were hauled in and the men, shouting as they marked some hits along the waterline of the *Royal* James, climbed over their starboard rail for cover from the hail of shot that swept their own defenseless deck. Down-river the *Sea-Nymph* was out of the fight, struck on a spit of mud, the unfortunate *Henry* in her line of fire.

After the salvo from the pirate's ports, as the muzzles disappeared for reloading, the buccaneers yelled at the *Henry's* helplessness, and, showing above the rail, waved their hats and whiffed their flag as they called to Rhett and his men to "come aboard and surrender!"

All along the outer waist of the *Henry* ran a stout timber in which her chainplates ended, and this gave footing for her crew. Some stayed there, others took cover behind mast and cabin-houses while the powder-lads scampered here and there with powder and shot. By the mast, exposed, using his naked sword as pointer, Colonel Rhett directed his men.

A volley of musketry wiped the grin forever from some of the faces of the gunners in the open ports of the *Royal James*, driving them back from their posts. But still they fired, shielding themselves as best they could, and the pirate shot plumped through the deck of the sloop, hazardously close more than once to the powder-magazine.

After each volley while white smoke rolled high and thick Rhett urged his men to maneuver the starboard battery, turning guns and trunnions inboard and wedging them to a level, holding them with tackle and managing to fire them at the exposed bottom of Blackbeard's vessel. So with each crew dodging the crashing broadsides, with Rhett's men back on the sloping deck where life-lines had been rigged to help their foothold, pouring their bullets at the *Royal James*, with the freebooters jumping aside from the musket-balls that hummed like bees through the ports and now and then stung viciously; with blood in Blackbeard's gunroom and blood on the deck of the *Henry*, trickling down the slant through clogging sand and spilled powder, all through the afternoon the duel went on with now and then the bow-chaser from the *Sea-Nymph* pounding at the pirate.

The sun sank; men dropped gasping, to pray or curse as they felt life flickering out within them; and presently the tide began to rise.

"She'll never float again," Rhett said to Captain Benton, his voice hoarse with the breathing of powder-fumes, but his person still dapper and untouched. "We've riddled her like a sieve."

"We're little better off," replied the captain, his right arm bound and slung. "But I've plugged the holes that went through us and the carpenter thinks we can make shift to sail if this cursed tide ever rises."

"The *Sea-Nymph* is sound; we'll beat 'em yet," said Rhett. "If we could only board! We should have signaled the *Sea-Nymph* sooner."

Benton shrugged his undamaged shoulder. There was not a boat unshattered aboard the *Henry*. Neither sloop had enough men

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to risk a separate boarding against the pirate's crowded complement.

But Blackbeard was no sluggard. Long-range fighting never suited him overwell. When his own carpenter brought news of inability to make the bottom tight he came to a swift decision to settle the matter before the two lighter ships could float clear and place him at a disadvantage. His starboard boats were splintered but his port boats were in commission despite the *Sea-Nymph's* bow chaser.

"Boarders away!" he shouted; and his sunburnt, tarry devils, with their brawny bodies tough as rawhide, quick as cats, past masters of rough-and-tumble fighting, yelled with savage delight as they tumbled into the boats, cross-belts and breech-belts bristling with pistols, cutlases and knives keen for slash and cut through flesh and bone.

Their exultant cry rang out as their boats appeared from the port side of the *Royal James* and came racing across the little stretch of water toward the sloop. As they came they sang and shouted, those who were not rowing brandishing their arms, a motley crew in garish colors that the sunset gilded.

In the stern of the leading boat stood Blackbeard, swinging a heavy brass-handled cutlas, his whiskers dark against his flaming shirt. On him Rhett fixed cold gray eyes that never wavered while he barked out his crisp orders and the men of Carolina fired a crashing volley and clutched their boarding-pikes or the butts of bayoneted muskets.

Rhett looked with satisfaction at the slowly righting deck. He had long ago resined the soles of his boots, and now he snapped a command for fresh sand to be spread. It was all done in a medley of swift action.

There had been no chance to set up boarding-nettings. The free-board of the sloop was low, and the pirates leaped for the rail like panthers, legs over, bodies projected, pistols firing and blades cutting before they had a fair footing.

There was the clash of cold steel, cutlas against bayonet, with the flash and crack of pistols, the reek of smoke, the stamp of feet, shouts, muffled shrieks, the gasps of men hard-set; and slowly across the planks the desperate devils of Blackbeard, who lived to fight, forced back the men of Rhett until they broke the Carolinians up in whirling groups where men fell, and stabbed upward as they fell, or sought to pull down an enemy, striking, rolling and tripping the rest in venomous embraces.

Over the water came the boats from the *Sea-Nymph* to join the fight; but Blackbeard had sent his own boats back for the rest of his men and the odds would be even when all were joined. A gun from the *Royal James* blew the leading boat of the *Sea-Nymph* out of the water and the rest ran a dangerous passage.

One group of pirates rallied themselves about Blackbeard, and with his great figure in the midst of them they stormed about berserk, felling with fire and steel all who opposed them. Thrice Rhett tried to piece that phalanx and thrice he dropped his man, transfixed by his blade which glimmered red in the sunset. As the third dropped Blackbeard roared out a deep-sea oath and made for the colonel, who shufiled his feet on the sand and with a smile waited the onslaught.

"Ha, pirate," he said, "have at you, you dirty scoundrel!"

A BLADE was thrust at the colonel from one side, but he turned it off and with a twisted wrist severed the tendons of his foe so deeply that the man's hand swung as if on a hinge. A pistol exploded and its fire scorched the colonel's unwinking lashes. One of his own men disposed of that threat; and swift as a serpent strikes the colonel's blade went up to meet the bludgeoning smash of Blackbeard's cutlas.

As if by some miracle the pirate's weapon was angled off, and before he could recover Rhett's point had slashed the buccaneer just below the shoulder, tearing out a rag of the red silk shirt and with it a redder dye from Blackbeard's own veins.

Blackbeard's face was convulsed with rage and fighting lust. To him the spare, gray-templed figure was a joke, to be hacked down at a blow. He spat at the colonel, striking with terrific force and speed; and as if arm and wrist and hand and doughty blade had been welded into one snakish thing of steel again Rhett's sword put aside the blow and Rhett's steel licked hungrily close to the burly Blackbeard's side.

"You swashbuckler!" Rhett called to Blackbeard as all about them the fighting mob swirled, each intent upon his own

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private quarrel, attack turned in a second to a fight for life, the place in an uproar, though the pistol-shots grew less as they were discharged and the rush of the battle left no chance for reloading.

Roaring like a bull, Blackbeard leaped in and back, swinging his cutlas till the wind hummed before it, bounding from side to side with cut and thrust, howling his full repertory of foulness as the colonel, cool as a dancing-master, set aside each blow and lunged in tierce and carte under and over Blackbeard's guard. Cutlas against sword, both masters of their weapon, the fight was even. The giant pirate had astounding agility and again and again sprang back in time to save his skin, though that had been pricked a dozen times by Rhett's ever threatening steel.

"Split thee for a knave!" cried Blackbeard as even his great bellows of lungs began to fail him. "I'll slice thee yet."

"Never with that cudgel," retorted Rhett.

They were fighting warily at last, the pace slower, both winded, weary but resolved. The main fight went on unabated with the fresh coming of pirates and men from the *Sea-Nymph*.

"I'll have thee yet, pirate. 'Tis too merciful a death for one who should be hanged."

Blackbeard struck, using his cutlas like a flail; and the colonel, exquisitely judging the angle and the needed force, let the jarring blow glide over his own blade and spend itself while the pirate leaped back to avoid the counter-lunge. Rhett's blade pecked like an eager beak just over the freebooter's heart, and the heavy cutlas whirred about in a circle, clashing it aside.

"'Tis all as sharp as the point, pirate," said Rhett. "Sharp enough to shave thy filthy beard!"

And then Blackbeard, foaming at the mouth, his scarlet shirt outmatched by his own gore, went mad. He flung his cutlas at Rhett and snatched for his last pistol. His fingers had found the grip as Rhett's sword diverted the flying blade and sent it spinning into the mainsail.

The muzzle came from the holster like lightning, but swifter still Rhett's steel performed an arc, the point steadied, shot forward and with all the nervous force of the colonel was driven home, through shirt and hairy skin, through flesh and muscle and between arching ribs, on, cleaving the pirate's heart, on, until it reappeared beneath his shoulder-blade, and with up-rolling eyes, a curse fighting his death-rattle, Blackbeard swayed and crashed to the deck.

AT NOON the next day the governor and his council sat in the Council-House awaiting news. The fisherman who had hailed the *Henry* had told of the pirate waiting back of Cape Fear and they had no doubt that Rhett had joined battle.

Rumors had crept in, uncertain and varying, for the fight was a hundred and thirty miles away as the crow flies. Their faces were lined with fear or gravity according to their degrees of bravery.

If Rhett failed? If Blackbeard came back revengeful?

"I have every confidence, gentlemen—" began the governor; and then there came a burst of cheering from the harbor.

The councilmen rose and the governor ordered them to their seats.

"Let us show that confidence," he went on, "by awaiting the news here. I doubt not—" his voice trembled a trifle— "that Colonel Rhett will bring us good report."

It was hard waiting, but they could soon see a great throng hurrying up and across the common. In their midst strode a spare figure, calm amid the excitement. Presently the colonel bowed upon the threshold of the chamber and advanced to the table opposite the governor.

"We have had a most satisfactory encounter," he said smilingly. "There have been losses—and great gains."

"And Blackbeard?" asked a councilor. "What of him? Is he taken prisoner?"

The colonel thrust his hand inside the pocket of his coat and brought out something that he tossed in front of the governor and the craning council.

"I promised you a personal token of the affair," he said as the governor gingerly examined the trophy. "Blackbeard was an excellent fighter, but he had one fault—a slight misconception of the higher art of swordsmanship. His cutlas was a stout weapon but mine proved the better. That is the end of Blackbeard."

He smiled grimly at his joke as from hand to hand there passed some strands of black, coarse hair, stiffened and glued with blood. As the colonel had told the pirate, his sword had been sharp enough to shave him.

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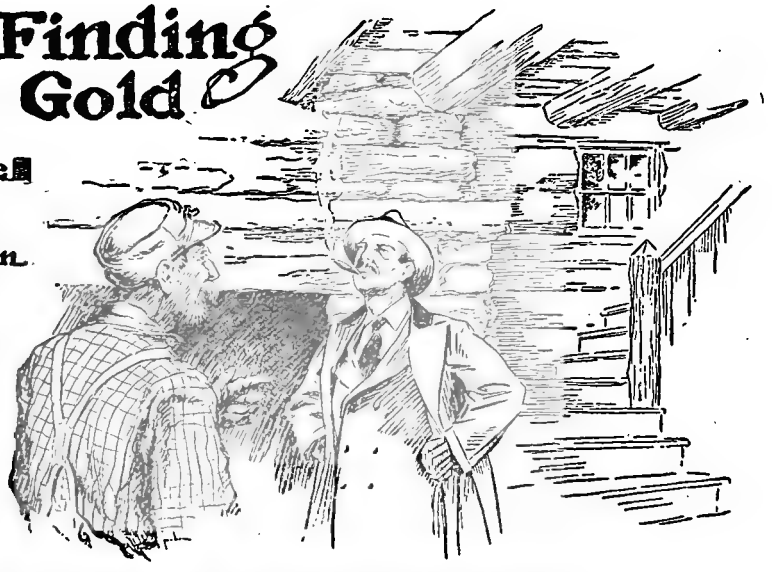
Just Finding The Gold

By Kathrene And Robert Pinkerton



Authors of "Smooth Prizes," "The Gift of the Barren Grounds," etc.

"BUT they're my pardners!" protested "Gold-Bug Jimmie."

"You mean they was your pardners!" snorted Dave Connor. "And I'll admit that back in the old Seine River rush they was as good as any man ever had. But for years now they've been just grafting off you.

"How many Junes is it you've turned your fur in here for grub and clothes for the three of you while they've tossed theirs across the bar for a four-day drunk? How long is it since they've been that kind of pardners?"

He spat out the last word and with an air of contemptuous resignation turned to the shelves to fill Jimmie's order as it had been given to him each June for so many years.

"Six shirts," he droned derisively. "Three pair of pants. Nine pair of socks. Shoepacks. They're hanging back there. You better choose them yourself. Leather isn't what it used to be. Long as you're going to be a fool you might as well be a wise one and get the worth of your money."

The annual argument had ended as it always had, as Dave was afraid it always would. In one short sentence, simply and confidently, Gold-Bug Jimmie Burrell had expressed his philosophy, his creed, his home-hunger, his life itself.

Before the purity and the strength of his allegiance to his partners all the warm-hearted but scathing expostulation of the storekeeper had gone down in defeat for years. Now the knowledge of the very futility of his remonstrance drove Dave on.

"It ain't as if you was a young fellow, Jimmie," he said. "And it ain't as if you were going to find this gold you're always looking for. Every year your trap-line is going to be shorter, and it's time you begun to lay something by instead of supporting those two bums next door."

At the words Jimmie stiffened. It was further than even Connor had ever dared to go.

"Now, Dave!" the old prospector protested. "It ain't right to talk to me that way about my pardners. None of us ever quit on any of the others.

"There's lots of tight places lying back of us in twenty years of bush together. And neither Archie or Elmer ever quit once. There's things all of us will remember and I can't quit on them in town."

There was a dignity in his bearing that silenced Dave. The storekeeper could not have expressed in words the grudging respect for Gold-Bug Jimmie that these arguments always instilled.

Outwardly he remained contemptuous of the old man's motives and exasperated by his unreasoning allegiance. But inwardly

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he paid the instinctive homage that the world has always accorded to the pure beauty and rare unselfishness of the love of a man for men. That, and the knowledge that he had gone a little too far in his denunciation, changed his tone as he leaned across the counter.

"It ain't that alone, Jimmie," he added, "but you'll never get a stake. Every one but you three has quit trying to find the yellow stuff around here.

"And if you do find some, you know the only kind of money that's cool enough not to burn a hole in your pocket is the kind you work for. You ought to know that your-self after selling your mine down on Rainy. Look at the years you've been at it!"

They shared a common knowledge of those years, years of toil and optimism, of eager searching and of patient defeat, of faith where others jeered, of devotion where others scorned. Only Dave did not realize, and perhaps Jimmie did not, that gold and the finding of it had slipped into second place and that the life of the three together, the common welfare and the common happiness, had become the shrine toward which the old prospector's eager eyes were turned.

In his sincere desire to save his friend Dave Connor was driven to a final effort through an exposure of the pain and bitter disappointment of those twenty searching years. With a final denunciation he summed up the results of Jimmie's eager peering into crevices in the earth, taunting him with its futility and hopelessness.

Through it all the old man remained silent, his wistful eyes never wincing, never relinquishing their dream.

"I know, Dave," he said when the other's tirade was ended. "But this Summer it'll be different. We're going back to a little place we haven't seen for fifteen years. Sort of forgot it like. And there's gold there sure as shootin'."

WITH an air of weary resignation Dave tore off a piece of wrapping-paper and added Jimmie's bill. He subtracted the total from the price of the fur previously graded, checked his figures and then pushed the paper across the counter.

Jimmie studied it a moment. There was no question in his mind as to the fairness of the prices. He knew Dave Connor. At last he looked up and in his eyes was an expression of fear and of doubt.

"It gets smaller every year," he whispered, a touch of panic in his voice. "Smaller every year!"

"That's what I've been telling you!" Dave cried. "And you're getting older! Some day the bush will get you. You're too good a man to die in a shack!"

At the words Gold-Bug Jimmie's eyes, half-closed by a lifetime on Northern lakes, opened wide with terror. He leaned across the counter tensely.

"Die in a shack!" he repeated in a terrified half-whisper. "Why did you say that?"

Dave Connor, sensing that a chance phrase had won where a tirade had failed, looked at him in wonder. Then without waiting for an answer Jimmie drew back and stumbled toward the door.

"I dreamed that same thing last week," he whispered.

He went out and across to the woodpile in front of the store, where he found a seat. Through the early part of the long, warm June afternoon he did not move except when he drew a chocolate from the bag he held—always his first purchase upon arriving in town—and munched it slowly.

His back was toward the door and he did not turn when Dave came out and stood on the steps nor when wild shouts and senile laughter burst from the open door of the bar. Once Elmer Hedges and Archie Bagnall appeared.

"There's Jimmie!" Elmer cried thickly. "He's got a good long wait ahead of him."

"Just like he always is," Archie added. "Sitting around until we get over our bust."

The small crowd of barroom loafers that had gathered upon the arrival of the prospectors laughed uproariously, so uproariously that Archie immediately herded them back for another drink. Dave, in a sudden frenzy, started toward them, but Jimmie called him back.

"They're just boys having a good time," he said gently. "They don't mean anything by it."

He turned his back again and Connor retreated within the store, leaving Jimmie to his thoughts.

A freight-train, wheat-laden, slid out of

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the spruce from the distant prairies and took haughty right of way over a train-load of coal bound for the treeless plains. A birchbark canoe touched the river-bank and an Indian hunter and his family came slowly up the trail to the store to exchange pelts for flour and tea.

But Gold-Bug Jimmie Burrell, sitting between a main highway of the world's commerce and a by-path beaten by the feet of the most primitive of traders, did not lift his head to glance at either. It was not until the west-bound transcontinental summoned him to his annual dissipation that he arose.

To Jimmie the train was theater, club, newspaper and bar. After a long Winter in which he saw no one except his two partners, the string of ocean-to-ocean coaches was like the crowded street of a city in which he had lived and in which, as he strolled along, he could greet old friends.

There had been a time when the twenty minutes allotted for changing locomotives were not sufficient for Jimmie to get past the smoker, so many familiar faces did he find. On this day he searched the windows eagerly, but he walked to the last of the day-coaches without seeing any one he knew.

"Dave's right and I am getting old," he whispered as he wandered in bewildered loneliness past the transcontinental sleepers.

Here he did not look at the windows. His friends never used a Pullman and he did not even know that he had passed the last of them and was abreast a private car until he heard a sudden rapping on a window. He wheeled to see the glass fly upward, and half of a great body thrust itself out.

"GOLD-BUG JIMMIE!" boomed a voice, and the next moment the stiffened fingers of the old prospector were being crushed in a huge paw that, while soft, retained the color and form of a hand that had known excessive toil.

"Well, Mr. Boyd!" Jimmie exclaimed, sudden joy in finding a familiar face overcoming that natural diffidence which under other circumstances would have been heightened in the presence of this swiftest of meteors in Canada's rapidly growing railroad world.

"Haven't seen you for ten years, Jimmie," said Boyd; "not since that time you paddled me across Rainy Lake. Still prospecting?"

"Yes, Elmer and Archie and me. We're going to find something this Summer sure."

"Hope you do," laughed Boyd. "You haven't forgotten what the old squaw at Shay-Shay Narrows said when we got across the lake that night? She was sure spitting mad because you run your Peterborough into her birch. But at that we'd 'a' been lucky to get ashore that night if we'd landed in a tank of boiling oil, let alone smashing her old tub."

"I'd forgotten all about that," said Jimmie.

"Well, you ought to 'a' remembered the curse she put on you. Something about you might find ten gold-mines but you'd die in a shack just the same. Wait a minute!"

Boyd withdrew his head before he saw Jimmie's happy grin converted into a gaping, wide-eyed picture of complete dismay.

"It's sure good to get out in a bush town again!" Boyd exclaimed as he leaped from the car-steps, took Jimmie's arm and started down the platform. "That car's fixed up with everything a man can want and a lot I haven't learned to get used to yet, but there's something cramping about it, just like clothes that are too tight."

For ten minutes he walked and chatted. In the hugeness of the man, hugeness of body and hugeness of spirit and of vigor and will, Jimmie Burrell forgot his brooding terror, forgot Dave Connor's tirade, forgot even his drunken partners. He forgot, too, that he, an old prospector, was chatting with one of the builders of empire.

For George Boyd had been a lumberjack only fifteen years before, and though he had risen above the bush he had never shed its aroma. Now while throwing a railroad across Canada he found not only time for but pleasure in a whiff of wood-smoke through Gold-Bug Jimmie's nostrils.

Even when the train had gone and Jimmie had returned to his seat on the woodpile the spirit of the man remained. It had been like a beacon of hope to the old woodsman, straightening his shoulders and giving to him an air of definite purpose.

Supper was called and the men tramped noisily from the bar to the dining-room, but he never moved. Dave Connor returned from his meal and reopened the store, but Jimmie did not look around.

The late Northern sunset flared and died

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behind the spruce and the first owl hooted in the soft darkness. Then Jimmie suddenly sprang to his feet, walked into the store and picked up his packsack.

"Dave," he said, and there was in his tone a note of desperate purpose and biting loneliness, "I want my third of that outfit."

Quickly and silently the two men sorted it.

"Keep the rest and give it to the boys when they get over their bust," Jimmie said when they had finished. "And give me the money that's coming."

Without comment Dave counted out the little pile of silver and bills. The result of Jimmie's brooding hours upon the woodpile was now clear to him. He knew he had won. He had severed his friend from his disastrous allegiance.

But even in his elation there was a vague feeling of regret. It was almost as if something beautiful had been broken by his fumbling touch.

"Leaving tonight?" he asked at last, the reticence of men who live on the edge of things restricting him to the one casual question.

"Yes, and I don't know when I'll be back," was the answer. "I know just one thing: Gold-Bug Jimmie isn't going to die in a shack."

He turned and staggered out of the door under his load. When Dave took the mail-sacks to the passenger-train later that night he saw Jimmie climb the steps of the smoker, Port Arthur-bound.

THREE days later Archie Bagnall and Elmer Hedges found their packs empty. The bartender, who had been an admiring friend so long as his hundred per cent. profit on whisky had been augmented by a two hundred per cent. profit on fur, suddenly lost the ability to smile or to reach for bottle and glasses. Penniless, heads aching, heels clumping, the two old prospectors turned toward Dave Connor's store.

They did not speak to Dave but hurried away after a stealthy glance inside. They went into the hotel office and up to the station.

Thus having completed a round of the public places of Sabawi, they hesitated uncertainly until struck simultaneously by a thought that sent them down the trail to the river. But their big canoe was exactly where they had left it.

Still silent, for they were sober now and each was gripped by a sudden fear, they went back to the store.

"Know where Jimmie is, Dave?" Elmer asked carelessly.

"Jimmie Burrell left Sabawi three days ago," the storekeeper announced shortly.

Elmer and Archie glanced at him quickly but neither spoke.

"He took the night train for Port Arthur," Dave continued evenly. "He took his third of the outfit, too, and he's quit you."

"You're a liar!" declared the two old prospectors instantly and together. "Jimmie Burrell never did such a thing."

Until that moment they had been two sheepish, sodden men of the bush. They were unshaven and unclean, they suffered from the physical effects of their debauch, and a deep sense of shame had robbed them of any power to resent an insult to themselves.

But in the face of this heresy their eyes cleared and hardened and they stood straight and close together. For a long moment they glared their scorn at Dave Connor and then with a dumfounding dignity they wheeled and left the store.

That dignity persisted even when the two backs which had not bowed to any man's command for a quarter of a century were bent over pick and shovel in the railroad's "extra gang." When the first pay-checks came Elmer went to Port Arthur and Archie continued to toil.

In a week Elmer was back. He had found three men who had seen Jimmie and a fourth who had sold him an old Peterborough canoe.

Dave Connor, no matter what his own sentiments or inclinations in the matter might be, did not have it in him to disregard Jimmie's orders relative to the supplies and clothing he had left. They were offered to Archie and Elmer, who took them without hesitation or comment. The morning after Elmer returned from Port Arthur the partners loaded their canoe and disappeared.

In the days that followed there was never a question in the minds of the two as to the loyalty of Jimmie Burrell. That he had deserted them without a word was not conceivable.

They had spent every day and night with him for twenty years. They knew him in

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their common terms of danger and toil, of hope and failure, and they could not understand how disloyalty might be possible.

Only one thing could have happened. Jimmie had always been the most volcanic of the three. His enthusiasms and his sudden superstitious hunches had driven them to many a toiling wilderness journey in their long search for the elusive metal. Now such a fancy had seized him or he had gotten wind of gold and had had to go.

A readily acknowledged sense of guilt made them bolster up this theory. Perhaps he had spoken to them and returning sobriety had failed to bring it to their consciousness.

Or he might have left word for them with some one who had forgotten to deliver the message, or had tucked a note into their packs which they had not found. The hope of this had set them to long searching, to the opening of bags and the turning out of pockets.

Through it all they never relinquished the idea that somewhere Jimmie was waiting for them, needing them, wondering why they did not come. Somewhere in that vast wilderness north of the international boundary he was sure to be, and before Fall had forced a halt their paddles had flashed on half a thousand lakes and their backs had bent on uncounted portages.

With the first thin ice on the muskeg ponds the two turned back to Sabawi. Though they did not like Dave Connor and knew that he felt only contempt for them, they went to him at once and told their story. Dave, worried and mystified, listened in silence.

"He'd never leave this part of the country," was the opinion he finally voiced.

"Never without telling us or leaving word of where he'd gone," agreed Archie. "And that being so he's sick or hurt. Something's happened to him."

"There wasn't any mail for us?" asked Elmer hopefully. "Or he didn't give you a note?"

The storekeeper shook his head.

Without embarrassment or humiliation they asked for, and obtained, a Winter's outfit from Dave. They had never gone into debt before, always getting their grubstakes through work at the traps. But in the face of such a situation they considered their request a legitimate demand, believed that it was their right.

Even the trapping would have been abandoned and the debt to Dave Connor increased had it been possible to search during the Winter. But they knew they could not haul enough grub to last them through the wide stretches of wilderness, and impatiently though faithfully they applied themselves to the gathering of pelts.

In February, when the intense cold restricted the movements of the fur-bearers, Archie looked after both trap-lines while Elmer went to Port Arthur in a second attempt to trace their partner. Failing in this, he traveled three hundred miles on the railroad, stopping at every place where it would have been possible for Jimmie to purchase supplies. Nowhere did he find anything that could have been considered a clue.

ANOTHER Summer and another Winter passed. Each Spring the two partners paddled to Sabawi as soon as the ice went out, not waiting for the bear-trapping.

Without hesitation, without a thought of the bar, they turned in at Dave's door, emptied their full packs and waited silently until the fur had been graded. Before night they were gone.

From early May until late in October they shoved their canoe into every by-way of a vast wilderness. From Rainy Lake to Port Arthur and from the boundary to Lac Seul they searched as they had never searched for gold. The Maligne, Turtle, Seine, Shebandowan, English, Pipestone, Namakan and Wabigoon rivers, a thousand nameless, unmapped lakes and hundreds never seen except by rare wanderers like themselves, all knew them in those three Summers.

More than two hundred years before, a Jesuit missionary had traversed the same country; but his faith and his zeal in the face of peril and worse than death were no greater than those of these two trusting, lonely, heartsick old men. They ceased to reason or to plan. After two years they ceased many times even to hope. Yet they could not stop.

Mechanically they outlined a block of wilderness and painstakingly they searched it. Only in their rare encounters with other canoemen did hope flare and eagerness quicken their paddle-strokes.

It was not until the third Summer was half-gone that doubts crept in. Long hours of thoughtful silence became habitual as they

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battled across wind-swept lakes. They began to glance at each other apprehensively, each dreading to put into words their growing conviction.

Finally Elmer spoke.

"Archie," he said one evening as they smoked their pipes beside the fire, "did you ever think about those funny hunches Jimmie used to have, and all those dreams?"

"What of it?" And fear gave an unwonted sharpness to Archie's tone.

"Well, I wondered—" and Elmer faltered a little in his distress—"I wondered if that was just the beginning of his going off his head."

"You mean that Jimmie's gone bushy! That the bush has got him!"

"It must be something like that or he'd 'a' left a message for us at Sabawi long ago."

It was a subject too painful even for discussion. For a long time they smoked their pipes in silence. Then they knocked out the ashes and went to bed.

In the morning as they loaded the canoe they glanced at each other uncertainly, a common question in their eyes. With one accord they stepped in, picked up their paddles and started off.

The last week in August found them down near the American border retracing a former route. On a small lake they met two young men from the States, "tourists," southbound after two weeks of what was, to them, an eventful wilderness journey. The canoes had no sooner pulled alongside than the questions, which had become formulaic, began.

"He's an old fellow, about like us," Archie explained. "His name's Gold-Bug Jimmie Burrell and he can't see anything except this white stuff, quartz, that's scattered all through the country."

"Or talk about anything else, either," added Elmer. "That's where he got his name."

"We didn't see him, but we saw an old fellow who's bugs on something else," one of the tourists replied. "It was on a lake about forty miles north of here."

"Funniest thing I ever saw," interrupted his companion. "He's building a log palace a hundred miles from nowhere and he lives in a little shack beside it. He's got it up to three stories and it's spreading all over a point. We wanted to stop and look at it, and the trout-fishing there is the finest we ever saw, but he drove us off with a gun."

"A fortune-teller or some one told him he was going to die in a shack and he said he'd fool her," explained the first youth. "He says he'll have his palace done in another year and then he'll die in it."

"What's he look like?" asked Elmer huskily.

"He looks like a wild man, all right enough," was the laughing reply. "Long whiskers and long hair and crazy-looking blue eyes and he hops around like a jack-in-the-box. He can do as much work as any three men I ever saw. We sneaked back and watched him."

The young men babbled on until Archie gruffly interrupted.

"Where did you say this lake was?" he asked.

They unfolded a map and pointed to the spot. Elmer and Archie looked at it. Without a word they began to paddle.

Throughout the long afternoon they did not speak. Miles of lake and river and portage slipped by unheeded. The end of their thousand-league search had come, but it had brought only bitterness. Even in the intimate seclusion of their camp-fire that night they could refer only to things of the past.

"We were on that lake a year ago," Elmer whispered. "He must be on the north shore behind that long island. We always crossed the big stretch."

"And he's been getting supplies at that trading-post on the States side, above Tower," Archie added. "We've been circling him every year, but we never cut his trail because we didn't think of his going to the States for grub. And Jimmie proved up on some claims around there once. Mind that time we was looking for iron?"

Their paddles lagged the next forenoon. They knew their search was ended. The builder of this strange edifice could be only their Jimmie. They wished intensely to go on and save him from his mad labor, yet they hesitated, were beaten back by the picture of the hairy, wild-eyed creature they would find.

AT NOON they rounded the long island and saw the amazing structure before them. Extraordinary as it was, there was no room for it in their interest in the presence of the mad figure that whirled down the beach, flourishing a rifle and shaking a fist.

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"Jimmie!" Archie cried, and in the one word he expressed all the loneliness and the poignant suffering of the long search.

But there was no recognition in the wild blue eyes that watched them.

"Get away from here!" a shrill voice called across the water. "Get away or I'll shoot you!"

Archie, in the bow, sat motionless and silent, the tears leaping the great furrows in his face. Behind him Elmer was swearing in a flat, even whisper, a tone that contrasted curiously with the hideousness of his words. Then both men began to paddle toward the beach.

"Get out of here!" cried Jimmie as the bow of the canoe touched the sand. "You can't land! This is my property!"

The two partners did not move. They did not see the threatening rifle. In abject misery they were staring at the wild eyes and the disheveled appearance of one who had become one of themselves through long years of hope and failure and effort together. It was as if they were looking upon their own withered legs, severed and lifeless and yet dancing and waving there on the shore.

"*B'jou'*, Jimmie," said Elmer at last. "Quite a place you've got here. Don't you know us?"

He spoke casually and for the first time his eyes shifted from the man on the beach to the "palace."

"No, I don't!" was the shrill reply. "Get away! This is my land and I won't have you snooping around!"

"We're not snooping," soothed Archie. "We were just paddling past and saw this building and come over. Do it all yourself?"

"Who d' you suppose is helping me?" Jimmie countered.

"What you aim to do with it?"

"Live in it! What's any man build himself a house for? Everybody got to telling me I'd die in a shack, even a fortune-teller down to Port Arthur. I told her she lied and all the rest of them lied.

"I'll show 'em! I'll build a palace like no one in Canada ever saw and I'll live in it and die in it. George Boyd couldn't have a finer one. I'll show 'em!"

His increasing excitement sent him threateningly toward the canoe. Elmer thrust a paddle against the sand and the Peterborough glided backward. Silently they paddled around the next point and then went to shore.

"He didn't even know us!" moaned Elmer. "And after we've been pardners for twenty years!"

For a time they stood there, gazing at each other in helpless misery. Their long search was ended but ended in a problem with which they could not deal.

Jimmie Burrell overturned in a rapids, through the ice, his feet frozen, his life endangered by any of the thousands of things that may happen to a man in the bush—these would have presented situations they were not only competent to meet but into which they would have rushed gladly, naturally, with confidence.

But Jimmie Burrell raving, shrieking at them, driving them away when he had not seen them for so long, a Jimmie who was and yet was not their partner of twenty years—he presented a problem in the face of which they were not only helpless but without hope. It was something wholly outside their experience, and so they turned naturally to Dave Connor.

At first they believed there was no help there. Dave, on learning of their discovery, was too busy in a vituperative denunciation of himself to offer a suggestion.

"I did that!" he exclaimed. "I'm the one that tipped his mind out of plumb, that put the idea into his head. I told him if he didn't get a stake soon he'd die in a shack. That's what did it."

"But it's done, and what's to be the next thing?" interrupted Archie. "That's what counts."

"There's no doubt but what he's plain bushy," Dave answered, "and that means he's got to be taken away from there. He's liable to get hurt hoisting heavy timbers up three floors. You must put him where he'll be safe."

"You mean shut him up in jail?" demanded Elmer.

"He can't stay where he is, that's sure," replied Dave.

Archie and Elmer turned to each other in horror. It was unthinkable that Jimmie Burrell should be shut up behind stone and steel—their Jimmie, who had never known restraint except that imposed by his own sense of loyalty and justice.

"No," said Archie decisively. "That won't do, Dave. We'll take care of him ourselves."

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"But what can you do?" Connor protested. "You can only keep him from killing himself, and you'll make him worse doing it. And an asylum ain't what you boys think it is. It's different nowadays. They treat men like Jimmie just as if they was sick.

"The chances is that Jimmie is only a little daft, just plain bushy, and that a good doctor can bring him around. After he gets better you two boys can take care of him easy and like as not he'll be all right in a couple of years."

More argument than this was required but at last Dave won, and he settled the question by going into the hotel and getting Jerry Meigs, provincial policeman, who was waiting for the Port Arthur train after a campaign against moose-slaughtering section-hands.

Meigs was a man wholly without imagination and possessed of a rigid sense of duty but most literal in his interpretation thereof. He listened to the partners' story and agreed at once to accompany them to the wilderness "palace." A day and a half later they landed on the beach before it.

JIMMIE was not to be found. His canoe was gone and the absence of several pieces of equipment in his little one-room cabin indicated a journey of some length.

As there was no evidence of a hasty departure and his supplies were low, the three decided that he had gone across the border for provisions. This point determined, Meigs turned from the little cabin to the huge structure beside it, and the partners followed.

Enormous as the building was, and extraordinary by reason of its very hugeness, there was still something about the "palace" that robbed it of any suggestion of the bizarre or the grotesque. Meigs and his two companions only sensed this, for their interest lay in the effort rather than the result.

Had any of them possessed more than an intuitive appreciation of the esthetic he would have seen that the squat effect conformed with the low horizon, that the unpeeled logs offered no glaring contrast with the unbroken forest or gray-rock shore-line. He would have seen that this huge structure was nothing more than a glorified trapper's cabin, just such a building as Elmer and Archie would have erected on a smaller scale.

But the two partners were men who had devoted a lifetime to the training and diversified use of their hands and to the development of inventive faculties, and Meigs sprang from the same stock. To them the wonder of the building lay solely in the fact that one man was responsible, that two hands alone had placed so many great logs one above the other, that the energy confined in one human body could have been so multiplied by ingenuity that the combined effects of steam and intricate machinery had been attained.

In dumb wonder they went through the great open door that faced the lake and found themselves in a large hall. On the opposite side was a fireplace of rough stone in which, as Meigs remarked in an awe-strangled whisper, a moose could have been roasted whole.

Great tables and wide, comfortable benches hewed from massive timber were scattered about among shavings and chips. A stairway, broad and with wide steps, was built of hewed logs.

Beyond the first big hall was another large room with long tables of hewed timbers and behind this were smaller rooms. The stairs led to a long hall with rooms opening on either side, partitioned off with whipsawed lumber. The unfinished third floor was the same.

Their inspection of the interior finished, the three went outside. At the rear they found what interested them most; a sluiceway which explained how the big logs had been brought from behind the unbroken edge of the forest, a water-wheel, operated by the same water and which furnished power for whipsaws, cleverly rigged so that three boards could be sawed at once and with a minimum of muscular effort, and a crane and windlass and several tackles.

They examined all these things without comment, Meigs with growing admiration, Elmer and Archie with increasing wretchedness. To the policeman it was only something at which to marvel, but to the two partners it was a vivid picture of the affliction that had come to Gold-Bug Jimmie.

They could not marvel when they recognized the uselessness of it. They could not admire when they understood how he had worn himself out under the spur of a deplorable mania.

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Then they returned to the little cabin in which Jimmie lived and found a bunch of traps hanging at the rear and a neat bundle of stretcher-boards. It was the last pitiful evidence. It showed how Jimmie had financed his mad labors, how he had driven himself without mercy to build his useless "palace." Before it they were crushed with grief.

The voice of Meigs broke in upon their despondency.

"Crazy!" he exclaimed. "You can call it that if you want to, but no crazy man could do what he's done. He's just as crazy as a loon, he is. Why, he's got more brains than the two of you put together. I'm going to Sabawi."

He remained steadfast in his intention despite the pleadings of Elmer and Archie. In the end they took him back and turned helplessly to Dave Connor.

"We'll go back and stay with him," they finally decided when Dave had nothing new to suggest. "Some one's got to keep him from killing himself with those heavy logs. And maybe if we help him and get the blamed thing built he'll be contented to settle down and live in it."

"Do that!" Dave agreed. "It's the only way. You boys can trap Winters around there and the rest of the Summer and Fall you can get good wages on the new railroad. That'll give you a chance to make your living.

"The road runs just above Jimmie's place and they'll have steel down before Winter. You can stay with him and humor him and maybe bring him back to where he was."

THERE was no spring in the paddles of the two partners as they made their discouraged way back to Jimmie's "palace." The hope that kept their gray heads and stiffening muscles young through the long search was gone.

With a dogged determination they landed their outfit at Jimmie's beach and, ignoring his threats and furious abuse, established themselves within his little cabin.

"It's no use your talking that way, Jimmie," Elmer said slowly and evenly. "We're your pardners and we're going to stay. It ain't right your living here alone."

"And, besides, we'll help you finish it," interrupted Archie in a hasty effort to still Jimmie's rising storm.

"You mean you'll work?"

Jimmie asked the question quickly, with the cunning of mania.

"You'll both work just as I say?"

"Just as you say," they agreed.

Jimmie became at once a tyrant, a driving, vituperative, merciless taskmaster. He had breakfast ready before dawn and he did not begin the preparation of supper until darkness had come.

He abused and he found fault, he derided and stormed, and through it all the two worked in silence, without resentment or protest, without a suggestion or a remonstrance. On fair days they toiled outside. When it rained they hewed and sawed and planed and constructed furniture.

Several times canoes appeared on the lake. Jimmie, raving and shouting, would drive the visitors away. Engineers and construction foremen from the rapidly approaching railroad tried to see the inside of the great log house which one man had built, but always they were intimidated by Jimmie's maniacal reception.

As Fall came and tables and chairs and beds began to fill the many rooms, as the finishing touches were put on the exterior, the first hope came to Archie and Elmer. Jimmie drove them as before, but there was an intangible difference in the force back of his driving.

"He's going to be better once it's done, and that can't be long now," Archie declared. "If only he didn't have this fool idea of filling the place with furniture!"

Then one day in mid-October an unusual thing happened. Archie and Elmer were working on the third floor. Invariably the approach of a stranger was announced by Jimmie's shrill shouts. Now at the sound of voices in ordinary conversation on the floor below they dropped their tools and hurried to the stairway.

Jimmie, the old Jimmie, the Jimmie of the mild blue eyes, was conducting a stranger through the "palace." The man most evidently was not of the wilderness, and a glance through a window told the two partners that he had been paddled to the place by two guides.

With complete disregard for their open-eyed wonder, Jimmie led his companion past them and into each room on the floor. Then they went down-stairs and out through the door. As they stood for a moment under the windows the anxious partners were able to hear the visitor's comments.

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"Marvelous!" he said. "Marvelous, Mr. Burrell! You say there wasn't even a preliminary sketch? That is the remarkable thing about it in my mind, far more remarkable than your own physical efforts. There is a touch of the Alpine in the design, yet on the whole it remains distinctly Canadian, of our own Canadian wilderness."

Then Jimmie, with an air of crafty secrecy that was maddening to the men above him, led his visitor down to the beach, where they talked for half an hour. After the man's departure Jimmie returned to his work.

In the days that followed the two partners studied him in wonder. He had become again the driving monomaniac whom they must soothe and humor, and as the building approached completion he seemed to become worse.

Finally the only remaining task was to sweep out the refuse of building. Jimmie worked with them for a while and then walked through the building, slowly, critically, but with growing excitement. Suddenly he rushed to his partners.

"Now we're going to Sabawi!" he cried.

For the first time they considered protest, but one glance at Jimmie's wide, bright eyes and nervous gestures told of its futility. This was the moment upon which they had builded their hopes, and now he seemed to be only the wilder, only the more driven by his mania. Wearily they helped him stow the outfit in the canoe and paddled away.

At the Sabawi landing Jimmie leaped out and started for the store. He burst in, excited, eager, his partners at his heels.

"Hello, Dave!" he shouted. "Any mail for me?"

Dave glanced at the others for his cue and found it in their anxious faces.

"Why, hello, Jimmie," he said casually. "I believe a letter did come last week."

He went behind the mail-boxes and brought out a long, white envelope which he passed to the old man. Jimmie tore it from his grasp, opened it and drew out several papers.

All fell to the floor except a single, narrow slip which he gripped with both hands. Then he whirled upon his partners and demanded:

"You lads remember that time we was camped at the mouth of Grassy Portage Bay, down on Rainy, twelve years ago, and a big lad come along and asked us to take him across to Shay-Shay Narrows when a September storm was on and no Indian would do it?"

A childishly ecstatic triumph glowed in his eyes. Archie sensed what he believed was the awakening of a mind that had been long asleep and he strove to help it.

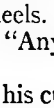
"That was George Boyd," he said quickly. "He was contracting-then. Said it meant thousands to him to get out because he had a big job on."

"Yes, and when we nearly drowned doing it Jimmie wouldn't take a cent of pay," Elmer added. "Said he'd work for wages but he'd never yet figured out what his life was worth."

"Well, Boyd's paid it all and more!" cried Jimmie. "It was him that put me up to it, not being bushy or being afraid of dying in a shack. I figured out the whole thing the day I sat out there on the woodpile for so long.

"At first I was scared of that dream and then Dave saying the same thing. But I got to thinking that it wouldn't be any disgrace to die in a shack anyhow, seeing's how I've always lived in one.

"But it was Boyd that showed me where the stake was. I was just using the other for a blind. And, Dave, you were right! Here Elmer and Archie and me has been working hard for twenty years on just chances and it wasn't until we started in making something with our hands that we ever made our stake."



FAIRLY babbling in his incoherent joy, he waved the slip of paper above his head. It was the only tangible object in the mystery, and Dave took it from him and studied it for a moment. Then the paper slipped from his fingers as he turned to Jimmie.

"Eleven thousand dollars!" and his husky whisper more than his words carried conviction to the dazed partners. "From the Imperial Canadian Railroad! Why, that's Boyd himself!"

"Sure!" cried Jimmie. "I said 'twas him that put me up to it. He told me if I'd build a place for a hotel for all them city tourists where the trout-fishing was good he'd buy it when the steel was down."

"You black-hearted little skunk!" shouted Elmer angrily. "Why didn't you tell us so we could 'a' helped you from the start instead of making us hunt you from —— to

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breakfast? And then when we found you you never said a word."

"Why—why——"

And Jimmie's exuberance vanished before the accusing glance of his partner.

"Why, you two've always laughed at my dreams and you'd 'a' thought I was crazy."

Dave Connor's shout of laughter interrupted him and then he added diffidently:

"Besides, I knew you two would come to Sabawi and get drunk and give the whole thing away. Then some one with money would have got in ahead of us. Our only chance was having the first place finished, all ready for them to step right into."

"Yes, but afterwards," persisted Elmer "when we found you and you were so near done. Why, you pretended you'd never seen us."

"I always knew you'd find me some time," answered Jimmie, "and I'd been covering my tracks by playing I was bushy. But I used to get to worrying nights for fear something would go wrong.

"I thought I'd rather have you just keep on thinking I was crazy than to think I'd get so fooled if the railroad didn't buy the blamed place. And then after you came and worked so hard, thinking you weren't doing anything but just humoring me, I kind of wanted to tell you first by showing you the check."

He leaned over the counter and stroked the paper for a moment.

"Just think!" and his voice became dreamy. "After all, we've made our pile with just our hands. It's mighty comforting to think we'll have it in a bank working for us and keeping us.

"But somehow, lads, it don't look so yellow as the real stuff itself. You know what I'd like to do?"

He stopped a moment and looked diffidently at Dave Connor. Then he went on, and the light in his eyes was of the fire of eternal dreams:

"After Dave has loaned us a little and has gone down to Port Arthur to take care of this business for me, and you lads have had your bust, I'd kind of like to pack up and go to that little place we were planning on three-four years ago. There's gold there."

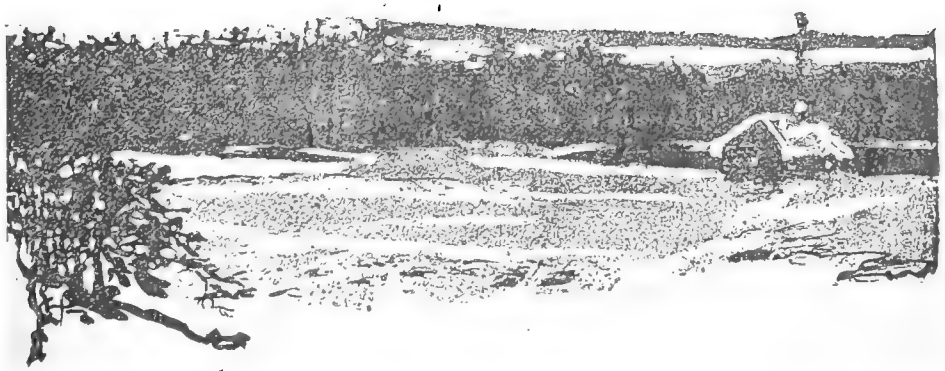
Two days later when Dave Connor returned from attending to Jimmie's affairs in Port Arthur he found the old prospector sitting on the woodpile, munching a bag of chocolates. As he stopped beside him the bar door opened and Elmer and Archie staggered out.

"There's Jimmie!" Elmer cried. "He's got a good long wait ahead of him."

"Just like he always is," Archie added thickly. "Sitting there waiting for us to get over our bust."

Gold-Bug Jimmie glanced up at Dave.

"They're just boys having a good time," he grinned. "They don't mean anything by it."



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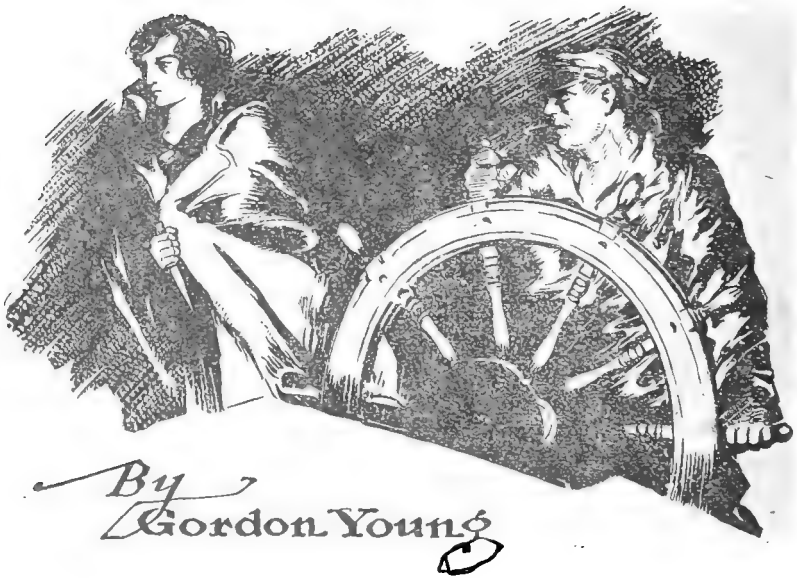
Wild Blood

A Four-Part Story – Part I.



By Gordon Young

Author of "Rich Crooks," "A Dead Man's Tale," etc.

CHAPTER I

TWO men were in the shanty bar, sitting at a rough board table; and I was the third.

I shall not pretend that I am of no importance in the story. I am telling it. I shall look after myself. I always have looked after myself, though it has taken little to do that. Chiefly no work, something to eat, and much besides water and coconut-milk to drink.

We three were on rough benches under a corrugated-iron roof and a bottle of gin was before us.

We leaned heavily, elbows to table.

The sun was hot and the roof was like a baker's door. Flies buzzed about with fretful persistence.

A dozen men slouched at the bar or dozed along the benches. Some were heavily booted, wearing coarse blue or red shirts, and were hairy of throat. Many of them were bearded. When they paid for drinks they would pull little chamois-skin bags from under their armpits or from wide-pocketed belts.

These men were from the diggings. They lay in port waiting for the boat, under the delusion that they could get drunker in Melbourne than at Turkee. It takes experience and some philosophy to convince a man that after the tenth glass it makes no difference whether he is under polished tables or under rough benches.

A discouraged squatter was dolefully pouring out a tale of drought and myalls to a miner who stood and dozed uneasily against the board counter. Two or three sailors, deserters no doubt, snored on the narrow benches.

A pair of troopers, elbow to elbow, paused in passing and filled the doorway. They said nothing, but stared with a certain detached, authoritative insolence, as men perhaps have the right to do when they know themselves well hated, feared; yet dare to ride alone, and often do not come back.

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They would not have been far in the wrong had they grabbed any man of us there, and haled him out, though they might have guessed wrong in naming the charge, for crime was very protean in Australia in those days. But judges frowned at troopers who leaned on guesswork; so many a man went impudently free through being tight-lipped.

My lips are never closed, except about the neck of a bottle. I mentioned to my companions how fortunate, then, that my record was stainless.

Each of them looked at me: the somber Englishman with the slow, steady gaze of a man who wonders a little, but doesn't understand or greatly care; the other man, not big but deep-chested and muscled like a python, had a flicker of amusement in his narrow gray eyes. He was sparing of words, tight-lipped and sober; always sober.

The troopers, thumbs in belts, turned smartly on their heels and walked away. Perhaps they were looking for some one; or maybe they paused to allow us to look at them. Understand me: I would not sneer at an Australian trooper; not even behind his back; not even with three thousand miles between us; not though he were dead and damned, like most of the men of those days.

I PULLED the bottle closer to my elbow and peered at the low-water mark. The sweet-bitter kiss of glass lips tingled my blood. Let those two men go on with their talk. One way or the other, or whatever they did, was nothing for me to worry about.

Though whatever they did would affect me quite as much as themselves. I was not much more than a young fellow. And even then I had made the choice of many crossroads; and I always felt that one was as good as another.

If we stole a ship and went north with this strange Englishman, who evidently had a quest that he was not telling to us—for I thought he lied like a man who knows what he wants but doesn't care to have others know—why then there would be queer things happen, and novelty is in itself a pleasure. If we stayed where we were, something would happen. It always did. However, I never stayed where I was for a length of time. I never liked many things to happen in the same place.

The tall, gaunt Englishman with the slender feet and the long nose and the black beard—the very black beard—did not know to whom he was talking. But he was in earnest. Nor did we know who he was.

In those days you took a man as you found him. It was impertinent to ask for credentials. He was a reserved, self-possessed, grim sort of a person, with heavy black brows and deep black eyes. Davenant his name, he said.

Had he known to whom he was talking he might have gone excitedly after the troopers; and shared various rewards with them. Perhaps not.

He could have shouted any one of my two or three names at all the troopers from Carpentaria to Melbourne. I was no mainland loafer. In the islands northward, in some of them, I was a little better known. Not much though, for mine was an exceedingly modest renown. Missionaries in particular knew me, by repute when not so favored personally; and were most unchristian in their attitude toward me. It wasn't my fault if their bishop hadn't known when there was whisky in his ginger ale.

Ah, but he made a grand speech; and right there and then gave the native girls permission to dance—right there and then. A row of white, pious, horrified faces were turned to him, but his eyes were perhaps a little blurred. Though it seemed to me that he did enjoy the *siva*. I did. So it was for one thing and another, I was remembered in one place and another. One doesn't loaf around in the South Seas for a dozen years without getting acquainted.

But the man at my side—I could have had a thousand pounds, a good round sum for a shifting idler such as I, by merely whispering his name into a trooper's ear. Perhaps a rounder, fuller sum than that. So many people were interested in him.

Legends were around that name. It was known over the Seven Seas and in most of their ports. Dead or alive, said the British government; and when the British government says that, this earth becomes a very small spot to dodge about on. Another European government wanted him dead. And he was supposed to be.

A fat, bearded scientist who spoke English thickly, on his way to the Solomons to study anthropogeny and head-drying, had confided with me, a year before, that he was to make demands upon the natives, and barter

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generously, for white men's heads, in the hope that this fellow's would be among them. Would I not go along and identify the head?

My friend was known to have been wrecked and thought to have been killed on the eastern tip of Guadalcanar. The naval officers of three countries had orders to take him, wherever found, as they would any pirate. One may write an order with a goose-quill and the merest drop of ink. But he knew reefs and atolls that were not on the map; he knew of anchorage and harbor that were not mentioned in the sailing directions, and the natives said that with his own breath he could make canvas pull.

But a German gunboat had shelled his little schooner, driven him ashore, and came on to find it burning. As usual, he had powder and dynamite on board. Even wrecked, he was too much for them. He disappeared into the bush.

German sailors had gone in after him and found cannibals. And on the rafters of some *gamal* house near that place a half-dozen German heads are even yet grinning under the softening veils of dust—unless the German scientist bid high enough to have them brought to him. But in that vicinity white men's heads are treasures to be desired above pearls and rubies. Yet this outlaw of the sea and land came through.

I KNOW now that those were stern, fierce, vivid days. Looking backward one can see so much better than when merely looking around. The present with the past gives the comparison; but what was then the present was so much more tame than what had gone before that even then we looked grudgingly behind us to "the good old days," which were even more inhuman and cruel than the early seventies.

Adventurers came from the ends of the earth. They had been coming for a century, for centuries. Spaniards and French and Portuguese, English and Yankee, Arab and Chinaman, all came. Out of England the *Scarborough*, the *Neptune*, the *Success* had brought them willy-nilly, in chains. Many a good citizen of the land had a father with "M" burned in his palm.

The good citizens later rose and burned, properly, the convict records; or such as they could get their torches to. It is hard to tell convict blood without a birth certificate; especially in Australia, whither murderers and those who stole loaves off a London cart-tail, or snared a rabbit under the nose of milord's gamekeeper, or wrote a pamphlet telling some truths about the King's rule were dispatched in equally heavy chains. Also branded, burned and lashed; turned over as slaves to freemen; bullied, cheated and tormented; but mostly beaten.

Frequently they escaped, and ranged the bush, more ferocious than the cannibal blacks, the myalls, whom they often joined. Missionaries had begun coming with Bibles and bundles of trousers and petticoats, all for the natives, at about the same time as these convict ships from Christian lands.

For a half-century bold, hard seamen from New Bedford and Salem had been dragging whales out of the South Seas—and all the other seas on the globe—and putting them into casks, that civilized people might have oil for lamps; and mutineers and deserters had left footprints on every beach. The *Bounty* was not the only ship that set her officers adrift; seamen hoping these officers would die, but without the courage to kill them.

Respect for officers was beaten in with the cat and the rope's end, and strangely few were murdered for it. But the lure of the purple-plumaged islands and brown maids was strong, and deserters many.

Some time in the early fifties gold was found and the four winds brought a headlong rush of men, and of women of a kind; and a few of the other kind. The whole face of Australia was scratched and gouged.

From one digging to another men scampered, drinking, gambling, quarreling, fighting, robbing, working, saving, dreaming, planning—but ready to pause at any time to chase the chinks. Yellow men were harried out of the camps, killed, or driven into a vicarious massacre under the clubs of the myalls.

After the vanguard, always the herder and the plowman. Herders loosened countless droves of cattle, and billows upon billows of sheep moved over the hills. Enormous plantations were laid out; from Tahiti to Queensland ships went out among the more savage islands to "recruit" blacks with beads, gin or manacles.

Seaman hunted natives, themselves headhunters perhaps, and dragged them off to a merciless slavery euphemistically termed

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"contract labour." Sometimes the savages cut out the blackbirder—and wore the manacles for earrings.

Traders too went to gather whatever could be carried off, from ancient weapons to copra. Factories sprang up and the dried coconut went forth to cleanse the world with soft-scented soap. It was quite common for traders to be butchered and eaten. It is not unheard of now. On the sea, under one guise and another, captains were pirates; and pearlers put out in luggers to scrape oysters from their beds, give Orient gems to the ears and necks of distant ladies and buttons to trousers and coats of gentlemen. Lumbermen went into perfumed islands, where perhaps the Phœnicians had been before them—for where else is sandalwood to be found?—and often under streams of arrows, poisoned, cut down forests that the silks and linen of dainty women from Japan to London might be sweetly scented.

Natives rose in brief, futile fights and butchered, with horrible ferocity, whom they could overnight. In three tongues the chancelleries of Europe quarreled over distant rights. And French convicts continued to be sent to New Caledonia.

From the days of Wallis and Cook to this very hour, under the guidance of another Cook, white men came and ate of the lotus and drowsed dreamily, head in the lap of a brown girl, remembering indifferently through a soothing stupor that some place in the world there was something rather of a nuisance called Civilization.

No man gets rich without wanting other men to obey the laws; and Civilization is as irresistible as if it were a plague. So the man who called himself Douglas Moore was an outlaw, on sea and land. I suppose I would have been hanged, too, had we been caught.

THE Englishman, Davenant, thought that *he* was the interested party. He thought that he had, more or less by accident, stumbled on to a navigator. It was amusing to hear him wrestling with Moore's conscience explaining why it would be really honest to take out the *Lady Betty*, to let her drift on the early tide, spread sail and scamper off.

The trouble was, though Moore did not say so in the presence of the Englishman, that the *Lady Betty* was encrusted with barnacles and needed some work on her bottom. There she lay, with three broken-down caretakers playing cribbage on board. They represented three important creditors, and a half-dozen little ones as well.

Who owned her? After she had been refitted and provisioned there arose a conflict of ownership. Who was to pay the bills? Davenant asserted that he owned her, and showed papers and made affidavits. He had bought her from a Yankee captain who was to remain the skipper.

But the Yankee had gone mysteriously. In fact he had gone before collecting the entire purchase price. He had gone about the same time that the A. B. A. Shipping Company of Sydney had sent one of its men down to get and hold the *Lady Betty*. She belonged to the A. B. A.

The Yankee had no right to sell her. It was, the A. B. A intimated, characteristic of Yankees to sell things they had no right to.

She was not the *Lady Betty* anyway. She was the *O. P. Jones*, in honor of one of the founders of the company.

Scratch out the *Lady Betty* and, they said, the trace of *O. P. Jones* would be visible. But it wasn't. Then they said Yankees were —— clever, but she was the *O. P. Jones* anyway.

Davenant wanted to get away. He was going after pearls—he said. He knew of an atoll where there were pearls, a virgin bed. He could not afford to stand around on his toes waiting for the A. B. A. to scratch off all the fresh paint in order to find *O. P. Jones*. He wanted to get away, and he had run across Douglas Moore.

Douglas Moore had more than one name. He found it convenient. And he had almost everything else that went to make a man hard to catch and harder to hold. He knew all about Davenant's troubles over the *Lady Betty* and the dispute as to her sex. He had looked the man over and understood a little, not much.

He had inquired about him and learned nothing except that he had a daughter in Melbourne lonesomely awaiting the outcome of the difficulties her father—that is, he was supposed to be her father—was in. So when Davenant sought out Douglas Moore he was merely taking an artful bait that had been dropped in his way.

Moore kept his own counsel. He had only Burly Ben Hawkins and me to confide

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in. Though we had, in a way, furnished him with master's papers, they were useless to him.

However, I had a suspicion that he was thinking about taking out the *Lady Betty* anyway—with or without Davenant. But just at present he seemed indifferent. For one thing he wanted about twice as much money as the Englishman was willing to offer.

"When the voyage is over I shall make you a present of the ship," Davenant had said. Few things could be more enticing than that to some men.

"And let the A. B. A. libel her the first time she shows up in a port," said the man who called himself Moore. "And me be hanged for piracy!"

He knew very well that at most the *Lady Betty* would add only an inch or two to the height of his gallows. But there is likely to be something wrong with a voyage when the owner so easily promises to give over the ship. Precious lot of pearls one would have to scoop up to pay for a ninety-ton brig that had nothing the matter with her but barnacles and a little rib or two that might spring a leak if hard hit.

But what that bearded Englishman didn't realize was that there was likely to be something even more wrong with a skipper who would take out a ship on the sort of proposition that was offered.

Moore asked to see the Englishman's map, and the Englishman pulled out a piece of rough brown paper with a few tracings on it, no names, but a cross at about 164 west and 12 below. Moore asked if it wasn't a copy from an Admiralty map, and Davenant was much impressed.

No reason to be. There was no other map to copy from that gave such a generous expanse of water, island-studded. Had it been some trader's or captain's map the Fijis and New Hebrides and the Western Solomons at least would have been left out. Here some two thousand square miles were shown in about a hand's-palm space; but the seconds were down fine.

"You really know where you want to go?" asked Moore. He was thin-lipped and hard-faced, and he did not make much noise when he talked—not even when the wind was up and thunder boomed.

"I do," said Davenant firmly.

He nodded his head two or three times. Moore watched him. I said nothing. But I watched Moore.

"Then it is not the atoll, but Dakaru you want!"

Davenant sat up with a jerk. The English aren't a people to jump up and wave their arms. No. When a lean Englishman, one of the lanky, long, thin-nosed type, bats an eyelid twice in three seconds, he is excited.

Davenant did not bat an eyelid at all. He simply stared at Moore for about a half-minute. Which meant that he was paralyzed.

I tipped the square-face over my glass. But a few drops lazily trickled out; just a flavor. So I quietly reached over and took Moore's brimming glass, and left mine before him. He would never know.

"How, may I ask," said Davenant slowly, calmly, "do you surmise that?"

I PAID the man a quiet compliment at the back of my brain, and began to think he had a well-tempered bit of steel for a back-bone. He was no ordinary man. One would guess that at a glance.

He was one of those fellows that could be thrown on to a beach in a pair of drawers and still give the impression of having come from a reception to my Lord Mayor. And he used words as if he knew what they meant and was particular.

Said Moore: "That's the only spot within the radius of a thousand miles, or nearly that, where's a real plantation. Grahame's a fierce fellow, and skippers give him a wide berth."

"But there are—are pearls," Davenant insisted nervously.

"There is an atoll two points east and sixty miles south, of this reckoning," Moore said, taking the paper. "There's bound to be good shell. Right temperature. Grahame owns it. But how can you or I sell shell out of the *Lady Betty's* hold? She'll be seized as soon as she sticks her stem into port. Turn the shell over to a pearler and he'll steal it."

"What proposition can I make you?" asked Davenant, a little more impressed than he ever thought of being by a stray sailor.

Moore laid it down briefly. He would agree to get Davenant to Dakaru—the native name for the island, since changed to honor some dead man who is supposed to have discovered it—in six months; but he must have full and complete charge and

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no questions asked in the mean time. Also twelve hundred pounds, cash, on board the *Lady Betty*.

"You are probably aware that it may be necessary to use—ah—force," said Davenant watchfully.

Moore's thin lips twisted a little. He nodded.

"Miscalculations would be embarrassing to me," said Davenant.

Moore said, "No doubt."

"I dislike the delay, though time is not the great factor with me."

Moore said nothing. He had done his talking—and never did very much. This was the third or fourth conversation.

"It may take some time for me to obtain that amount—in cash."

Davenant had just a trifle hesitancy, naturally. He really had no surety that he would get full service for his money. But he was a man in earnest. Who dices with the devil must fling gold to the table.

At the first meeting Davenant had intimated that he wanted references. Moore told him they were the easiest of things to furnish—that there were plenty of people round about who would write them out, so much per word.

Davenant took it silently, unsmilingly. Perhaps he was a judge of men. I wondered.

"Six months," said Davenant, a fresh suspicion coming to him. "You intend to use the ship for some enterprise of your own?"

"No. I'm after leeway. I keep agreements. There's a crew to get. A proper night to wait for. Proper beach to find and scrape her. Supplies to be had that you haven't. Takes time.

"I'll raise Dakaru in one hundred-eighty days, or before. But no questions asked or answered. That's final."

He had a way of conveying finality that was much more effective than words sound. Every move he made, every word he said, was decisive. He was tense, always tense; and never restless. His voice was never loud but his words snapped. There was no hesitancy about him.

"I agree," said Davenant after a pause.

Moore nodded.

"I shall give you the money as soon as I can arrange for it."

"No. Give it to me as I need it."

Another surprize for Mr. Davenant. Was the man a subtler rogue than he thought, or no rogue at all? The question looked out of his eyes. But one didn't question Douglas Moore; not even when one didn't know who he was. That is, one didn't ask him personal questions; though Davenant after a little nervous silence said something about hoping that Grahame was not a friend.

Moore might have said many things, and each of them have been the truth. He might have rounded out some full curses and launched them on Grahame's head with the true eloquence of my friend, Ben Hawkins, when wrath was on him. He might have briefly told a short story, and of how a knife at fifty feet had gone from his hand to search for Grahame's heart.

But perhaps he would not have mentioned that he was glad the knife had not found it. Or maybe he wasn't glad. I don't know. Some people said Douglas Moore was crazy; so tensely quiet, always—until he unleashed himself. Then he went headlong. No reserve. No caution. No—I was about to say no mercy.

Legend had it that he hated white men. That he was a renegade. Anyway he hated Grahame—or had reason to. But all that he did say was, abruptly, directly, that Grahame was not a friend; and Davenant had no way of knowing that Grahame was an enemy.

"I neglected perhaps to mention that my daughter will accompany me," said Davenant.

I hid my smile in an empty glass at the thought of a woman on Douglas Moore's ship.

Moore nodded, his face mask-like.

"Then it is settled," Davenant remarked a little uneasily.

I FELT that he wanted some papers signed, some witnesses to swear, some sort of solemnity to give the agreement a kind of culmination. He had, I reflected, come from civilized countries where an agreement was not likely to be observed to the letter unless it was riveted by lawyers. A strange man's mere word seemed such a stupid thing to depend on; no more binding than a dead man's word.

And this contract was important to Davenant. He showed it even by his repression. He had about him a manner of well-bred awkwardness.

He was dealing with things of which he knew nothing; but he was determined.

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Maybe the ease with which he had been fleeced by the Yankee skipper showed him how helpless he really was; but he was determined.

Perhaps this black-bearded Englishman wasn't helpless at all, but had to gamble at times, and risk a loss. One someway doesn't expect an Englishman to be black-bearded or to appear as Davenant did. But he was English—born so, anyway.

"Yes," said Moore. "Settled."

Davenant stood up, hesitated, looked toward the door and again at Moore, and seemed about to speak. He was tall and thin and erect in the shoulders. He stood not knowing exactly what to do; a glance fell on the empty bottle.

For a moment I thought he was going to ask us to pledge a toast of some kind; it would have been a grim sort of a toast if the truth were in it. One could see that. I am sure he felt that something, something definite, perhaps a little dramatic, ought to be done.

But he said, "Good afternoon" almost casually and walked off.

Douglas Moore sat motionless, his forearms spread on the table. His eyes set at nothing; his thin lips tight and straight. The muscles at the back of his jaw bulged; his teeth were set hard.

I drummed softly with the bottoms of two glasses, and in a sort of rhythmic monotone said:

"And now the devil is telling 'em to stir the fire and get out the biggest pot. There'll be soup o' dead men's bones, and blood splashed to the moon. . . . "

And I kept one eye cocked on Douglas Moore. Sometimes he seemed to listen to my nonsense as if it were a little pleasing, for when I was the better for a tumbler or two of gin I had the world in my pocket and my lips were restless. Sometimes he did not even hear me, did not hear even Hawkins and me together.

"Get me a crew," he said abruptly.

With that he stood up, paused, picked the gin-bottle from the table and, tossing it to the dirt floor, went to the bar. He spoke to the red-faced barman and went out.

"Get me a crew," he had said.

That was the worst of him. He did unexpected things—taking it for granted that I could do things he wanted, as he wanted. I did not like to be uneasy about doing anything right.

The barman waddled to the table and clapped down a square-face; gruntingly stooped over and picked up the empty bottle and went back to his domain behind the bar of rough boards with only muslin draped in front of them.

The discouraged squatter was still weaving his troubles into an epic of the immigrant's travail for the drowsy miner. The sailors snored unrestfully on their splintery couches. I eyed my virgin bottle; inspiration is always at the bottom of a square-face.

But I would be generous. I would drink it in the presence of Burly Ben Hawkins. He was a good friend.

CHAPTER II

I FOUND Ben Hawkins with his back against a gum-stump, his legs spread before him, his hands folded across his belly. His head was bent forward as if in solemn contemplation of that imposing region inhabited by his stomach. But his eyes were shut.

Hawkins was a prodigious man. In weight he was elephantine; in appetite a python; in soporific tenacity he could have subbed for one of the Seven Sleepers. A wicked and slothful creature, who would eat and drink everything in sight if he wasn't watched.

He smoked an enormous pipe and other people's tobacco. His cheeks drooped; his abdomen bulged so overshadowingly that it was impossible for him to scratch his left knee with his right hand; and he was nearly as broad as he was tall.

Sometimes he combed his hair, but what was the use? It was curly. Occasionally he coaxed me to shave him because more than a four days' growth of beard made his face itch. Usually his face was thickly studded with short black hairs.

His voice was hoarse and subterranean. And I loved him as my brother from the first hour we met.

"Give me three pound of tembac," this strange mountain of a man had said to the nervous little blond cockney in a general store at the mines.

The tobacco was handed to him.

He weighed it studiously, then:

"Here, my man, I don't want this. Give me a square-face."

The jumpy little clerk received the tobacco

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again and set a bottle of gin on the counter.

I was the other customer in the store.

"Red-Top, ever cheer your stomach with a drop of white-fire? From the looks o' you, you need one of my lamb stews. To make it proper you catch the lamb when the herder ain't lookin' an' hold him tight so the —— thing won't baa-aa-a till you get a mile 'r so down the road. Best to bury head, hide and hoofs.

"If you'd move fast, I don't believe you'd cast a shadow! You need fattenin'.

"Bury head, hide and hoofs. Police 're awful nosey in this man's land. Then you dip up a little water, flavor same with a pint o' brandy borrowed from last station; cut up the two onions—nice fat fellows, borrowed from the same place; also the half-dozen potatoes. Set the old iron kettle over a dry wood fire, and when she comes to a boil crumble in some o' that cheese borrowed from—don't make no difference what station.

"There's tucker for you! Look to me. My cookin' done that——"

And he tapped his noble belly in justifiable pride of large achievement.

"Start 'er, Red-Top, and take your fill. I never let go till bottom o' bottle, keg or barrel goes toward heaven."

The clerk rather timidly offered a grimy cup, but the big man waved it away and pushed the bottle at me.

I drank and handed the bottle over to him. Naturally I expected him to drink and return it. But he was no idle boaster. He held the bottle at arm's length for a second or two like a fond lover anticipating the embrace, then raised it to his lips, took a mighty breath and drank, and drank, drank, and drank.

Slowly the bottom of that bottle crept upward and upward until, with him leaning far back as if trying to hide behind his own vast paunch, there was not a drop left. He straightened himself and puffed mightily, clapped the emptied bottle to counter and said:

"I like a bit of a swig 'fore dinner. Goin' down the street?"

We started off.

"Hi sye," called the cockney, "w'at habout that gin?"

The mountainous man turned with stiffened shoulders, slowly, imposingly.

"Hyu dydn't pye me."

"Pay you? Pay you?" said the strange fellow with deepening voice. "Didn't I give you the tembac for it?"

The cockney eyes and lips twitched for a moment in amazement; then—

"Hyu dydn't pye me for that!"

"Of course I didn't. I give it you for the square-face. —— rotten stuff it was. Near gagged me. Think you tampered with it. Didn't you? Didn't you? I'll complain to the first trooper I see, an' you'll have to open another 'un and let him test it.

"My good freckled friend here'll testify I give you three pound o' tembac for a bad bottle o' gin. Rotten stuff, wasn't it?"

I affirmed that it was wretched stuff.

The poor cockney had a sort of cross-eyed expression on his face. He knew of course that someway he was being bilked, and he knew how, but he was just a little baffled as to the way to cut through and say so.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded my companion with a haughty depth of voice.

"Y-ice," said the cockney. "Honly keep to —— hout hof my plyce!"

"I will; indeed I will. No storekeeper can cheat *me* more than once," Hawkins returned pompously.

Taking my arm forcibly, he strode out.

I MURMURED something of my admiration for his new and original method of evading the perils of thirst.

"No, no," he rumbled. "Old Yankee trick. Useful in a pinch. I hadn't a shillin' and I had to have a drink. Good white-fire that."

I agreed that it was.

"Shiver my jib-boom," he said abruptly, stopping. "I'm a sea-captain. Avast the belayin'-pin and take two turns round the bobstay, lower away the ratlin' and—don't you believe it?"

From his pocket he pulled a flat oblong paper, neatly protected by fishskin.

"Here's a master's certificate to sail any ship he can get his feet on. Don't want 'o buy it, do you? I'm a starvin' man. Think o' the years I worked and toiled to get this little piece of paper I'm offering you for a guinea. You keep the paper for security. I couldn't part with it.

"You see b'fore you a perishin' fellow creature," and he lowered his reverberant voice dolefully, at the same time endeavoring to draw his very fat face into an expression of despairing hunger.

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But the strain was too great. He came out of his affected melancholy with a roar, a great internal explosion of laughter so that his body shook as if by an earthquake from within.

"Who did you steal this from?" I asked.

"Steal? Me? Sir!" Then, chuckling, "Taught a sailor to play poker and thought this might come in handy, seein' as he didn't have more money."

I would guess that some seaman had robbed a skipper of his papers, probably for vengeance.

Having in mind that Douglas Moore might somehow find occasion to use that paper by way of credentials—though he never did—I promised the man a guinea, and added an invitation to eat with us. He had said he was broke. Besides I liked him.

"Take it," he almost shouted with an impulsive gesture of two big hands. "Don't know one end of a ship from t'other. Just as soon go to —— as to sea.

"Shipped once. Boat went on a mud-bank. Captain had me running from one side t'other to work 'er off. Ever' time I go to sea, have to set on the main hatch to keep 'er from listin'.

"Went out on a yard—once. Got my feet wet. Hate ships. Never anything to eat on 'em. My name's Hawkins. Ben Hawkins. Burly Ben they call me—sometimes."

"I been called lots o' things. Sometimes I get excited an' set down on somebody. Silence."

He said that last in a low, slow solemn voice, spreading his hands with a gesture, *diminuendo*.

"Got any tobacco?"

I offered him "niggerhead."

Hawkins had been in the South Seas eighteen months or so, visited a few of the islands and come into Victoria to "look around." So he said. But he was likely to say anything, with or without innocent intent. The zest of life was within him. He liked to talk, and with the breathless brevity of fat men made his sentences short.

DOUGLAS MOORE had thought it best to get far away from the place where he was known, at least for a while; so he came around to Melbourne and vicinity and brought me with him. Some years before when our acquaintanceship was new he had asked, "And will you keep sober?"

"I will not," I told him.

"At least you are no liar," he said with a queer gleam in his fierce eyes.

So in one way and another we had become something like friends. I asked no questions and he gave no information. He had a curious weakness for thinking I knew more than I did, and his orders were disconcertingly brief.

Tradition had it that Moore had amassed a fortune and hid it away—when he had to pay three prices for everything to anybody that would sell to him. Many men found it more profitable to be friendly with him than to snatch at the price on his head. For one thing it was convenient to have Moore to blame for their own crimes. For another, supposing he wasn't caught and learned who set officers in his wake? Moore stayed clear of white men as much as he could. He was called a renegade. Natives liked him. Plenty of natives would have given him up, but some would not. Many a chief lied for him, and native kings to a man almost were as his blood-brothers.

Gin and rifles? No doubt he did furnish those things more than was legal, perhaps more than was wise and proper. But he had overhauled more than one blackbirder and taken back the captives to their own beach.

To win favor with the natives? Perhaps. He knew, I knew, all who have been near them know, that natives are not innocent and guileless; not even the best of them. But the worst of them are loyal and generous—unless they have been too intimate with white men.

Time came when the devil seemed clamoring for pay, and Moore had got out of the islands and drifted like any other gold-hunter around to the bottom of Australia. I came along. So there we were when Hawkins loomed before the cockney clerk.

I brought Hawkins to our shack, and he ate everything in sight and called it a "snack." We had moved several times since then, and he had come along. Moore had looked him over hard and said nothing. Hawkins had stared at Moore and been quiet for an hour or so—perhaps because he had been eating.

I am about as thin as a hawser, and my joints are loose; so one evening when Moore was away two bushy roughs came by, and

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were not mistaken in thinking I was an easy one to dispose of, and that they might then plunder the shack.

Hawkins, inside in the dark, quietly, so he might accuse the rats of having made off with it, was eating a slab of "damper." I had time to make one little squeak before a hangman's grip was around my neck—then a mountain came through the doorway. The two gentlemen who had thought to bail up our lonesome little place were spilled on the ground, and the weighty knee of Hawkins held first one and then the other while he proceeded to search.

Hawkins emptied their pockets and calmly appropriated the fair amount of dust he found on each. He called it "manna." After which he hobbled the two gentleman together, and we marched them over the dark road three miles to a jail at the diggings.

The bushrangers protested indignantly that *they* had been robbed. Their mugs were against them. They were wanted men, and known to the constables.

And back we trudged, loaded down with gin, rum and tobacco; the necessities of life. We left to Moore the supplying of incidentals such as flour, sugar, mutton, bacon, butter and tea. Oh, yes; we each bought a candle apiece so we could see to use the corkscrew, in the dark. Hawkins ate his—the candle I mean. Many and merry were the songs we sang on the way.

Moore looked at us—looked grimly, hard, at us—as we rolled in at dawn. I was drunk, I know. But I heard what he said, and I remember how he said it; half to himself, but aloud, tense, earnestly, not sarcastically.

"God, how I envy you fools! I *envy* you!"

SO THAT day when Moore had settled with Davenant and given me abrupt orders to find him a crew, I searched out Hawkins taking a nap against a stump.

By occasional tests I had discovered that Hawkins could not run—at least not far or fast. He could move fast simply by falling forward, and once within reach of his hands, one of which would almost hide a fair-sized sirloin, I was helpless as a corpse in the grip of a devil-fish.

I squatted down some fifteen feet away and tossed a light pebble at him. Then a fair-sized chip zipped at his head. A miss. I tossed a clod at the unmissable belly, and he stiffened up with an ox-like grunt and swore.

I stroked the bottle tenderly. A flash of interest passed over his face, but I told him to keep his seat.

"Water," he said contemptuously.

Now and then I had poured water into an empty square-face to watch the eager expression as he placed the bottle at his lips slowly change to one of surprized disgust as about half the quart went down before he knew what he was drinking.

"Business," I told him.

He drew a large bowl with a short stem to it from his pocket and demanded tobacco.

"Want to go to sea?"

"Me? I been to sea. Supposin' the —— boat runs out o' grub? An' me on 'er. Who's sure to be 'lected for supper? —— cannibals! Give me a smoke."

I filled my pipe with a watchful eye on him. He made a move as if to rise, but I was on my feet and ready to retreat, tobacco, gin and all.

He settled himself disconsolately and tipped the flabby brim of a shapeless hat over his head with one eye peeking out, hypnotically directed at the bottle.

"Think of a ship loaded to the scuppers with iced beef and mutton; a hundred cases of eggs; pork and sausages; biscuits and flour enough to feed all that heard the Sermon on the Mount; a mountain of fresh butter; coffee and rice; cabbages, potatoes and onions; too, live cows and a haystack on the fo'c'sle head—nice for drowsing on afternoons. A barrel of apples right by the forem'st with the head knocked in! Think! The hold full of ice, covered with bottled ale and porter, and forty kegs of beer in the waist, with a spigot, cup and no sentry; sherry, gin and rum, and three hundred pounds of books. And only eight good men besides yourself—to have it all.

"Northward we'll climb over the softly breathing breast of the ocean and take on a batch of Kanakas to do the work. We'll find a little island and pick up pearls, and all come back rich as nabobs. But they must be good men, good sailormen—so you won't have to do any work yourself."

Both of Hawkins's eyes were brightly visible and he was sitting up hungrily.

He commented on my imagination but made an elaborate effort to be less skeptical than he was.

"Listen," I whispered. "Moore h's made

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a stake. He wants a ship and crew. You're the man to get it. He's only a landlubber himself. You and I'll run the ship."

"You have the gift of eloquence, Ben. Pick out good husky sailor boys, or if they aren't sailors, good husky lads able to warp a schooner off a mud-bank. You don't want to heave back and forth to rock 'er off.

"Remember that iced hold and the layer of bottled ale. Go quietly up and down, whispering to this man and that. Talk pearls and don't forget the haystack."

I moved a bit closer. He was interested, and whispered back to ask if Moore *had* made a stake. I assured him. But Ben eyed me dubiously when I again mentioned that Moore was a landsman, green as stale cheese.

"You get the crew. I'll find the ship. Moore pays. Have a pipe, old Leviathan."

I tossed him my pouch.

"Didn't I mention cigars? A hundred boxes! And the pearls. Shh-h, but—we may have to poach a bit, but there are pearls!"

"By the cracked crown of Cleopatra!" he muttered, eagerly ramming his finger into the pipe-bowl.

"Have a drink." I passed the bottle.

He sniffed it; then bent backward; but I salvaged a spoonful or so for myself by a desperate snatch.

"You're not leggin' me?"

Softly, confidingly;

"Ben, old pal, how could you! Send 'em one at a time here to talk it over with me. Don't mention Moore. You and I are running this."

"Is he goin'?" A quality of interest was in the question.

"Of course."

"He's made a stake? How?"

"Don't be nosey. He's made a stake. By the way, ever' member of the crew gets a bit of an advance. But it has to be q. t. Very. Good strong drinkin' men."

SO FOR the next few days it was I who lay propped against the stump in the shade while fellows of all stripe and color drifted up uneasily to question, listen, doubt, wonder.

"Get me a crew," Moore had said.

It wasn't the first time I had got him a crew, even of whites. I knew all that he wanted was eight or ten strong men, and no more than two or three needed to be sailors. He'd make sailors out of them. "Plenty quick, damyes" as a black boy of fair observation powers had remarked.

I served out gin and lies generously. Moore had gone to Melbourne with Davenant. I had a free hand. I talked of fresh milk and haystacks, bottled ale and a hold of ice; and fired some men, made others dubious, and convinced many that there was nothing to it.

Blame me for this and other things; I am offering a story, and not pointing a moral. And what could I have done with the truth? As it was, a pair of constables called to squat at my feet and listen. I offered them the soft berths of cabin-boys, and spoke of a haystack on the fo'c'sle head. They went away tapping their heads significantly.

Hawkins talked with vast gestures and strange oaths, displayed his captain's papers, and sent recruits trudging to me. Whisper "Treasure" to the winds, and the feet of men follow the echo as children the *Pied Piper*. Pearls are nearly as potent as pirate's gold, or nature's. Beer, ale and a haystack—it is magic.

One by one I settled on a choice of men; one or two who knew something of work aloft, and others big-muscled and hard. And to these I put it more or less direct: "Do you want to go north on a hell-ship that'll pay double wages to good men? You'll be welcome to quit any time you see land, and there won't be complaints in port for mutineers."

One by one they backed out, confused in mind between the two conflicting inducements; but now and then this fellow and that said he'd sign on for the Sulfur Lake itself. A bit of an air of mystery helped me, and for their own good I weeded the faint-hearted. I had sailed with Douglas Moore—under the name by which he was known from Manila to Port Said. Hawkins stewed and fussed as he saw the backsliders; but I cheered him up as best I could and waited.

All manner of rumors were in the air as to just how crazy we were. Was there ever a ship went out of port in those days, or these, where the truth was told to the forecastle? Perhaps—not.

Douglas Moore came back. He had nothing to say more than that I had done it in my own crazy way, as usual, and ask how many could reef and steer?

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"Four say they can, but three are liars. One one-eyed little fellow wants off the mainland, bad. He's a sailor."

For the next few days Moore had a desire to fish, and he went out and around, and sometimes didn't come back with the night or dawn. As a skipper "reckless," men called him.

Not so, except when crowded. He knew tides and currents because they were life and death to him, and he hazarded no chance that foresight would evade. There is a powerful pull of tide on the southern coast, where the whole of the antarctic draws its breath; and an occasional land breeze; also sand-banks.

One evening after a moody, protracted silence about the lone wavering candle, jammed into a bottle-neck and dripping to the table, Hawkins said to me:

"I heard of a fellow once broke the hemp three times. What'd they do with a man o' my weight? And when 're you goin' 'o buy them cows?"

"Meaning?"

"The *Lady Betty*," he whispered, folding his thick hands across his belly and staring at me.

"Who guessed it?"

"Raikes."

"Well?"

"He said you was Dan McGuire."

"And?"

Hawkins moistened his lips a time or two. He was reluctant to go on.

I looked at him lazily—as lazily as I could with my heart rising throatward.

"He said he'd seen you once at Apia. Pointed out as—as—as——"

He stopped.

"Yes. I've been there."

With resolution:

"Said he didn't really know—" the voice dropped— "Hurricane Williams."

The candle wavered fretfully; a dingo wailed in lonesome anguish and a ghost-like breath passed through the uneasy forest behind our shack. The man called Moore was night-fishing out on the bay. It was moonless and he was alone.

I wondered how I could get word to him; and how we would get out. To take to the bush with native trackers put on the trail would be folly. He was no bush man.

"And he thinks I—I—am Williams?" I tried to laugh—a little.

"No. You're Dan McGuire, Raikes says. I've seen Hurricane Williams. Once."

"Where?" I asked slowly.

"Bundy Bay. We was 'cruitin' niggers. Williams showed up. We didn't get our niggers.

"Come alongside. Told our captain to start a fight an' he'd blow him an' his old *Fijian Maid* high as heaven. Said it was the captain's only chance to get there. Put the niggers back on the beach."

"Then why——"

But I checked myself. Perhaps after all the man was lying.

"Wouldn't mentioned it 'cept Raikes wondered who Moore might be. I said he was a landlubber—thought a sheet-anchor was something to keep beddin' from slippin' off o' nights. Raikes don't want to 'tract no 'tention to himself by informin' unless it *is* Williams. Thinks he'd get a pardon then."

"He said that?"

"Not in words. I ain't big a fool as I look. I knowed it was Williams—*that first day*."

I KNOCKED my pipe against the edge of the table and scrutinized the inside of the bowl as I spoke—

"And the *Lady Betty?*"

"I guessed it was her. Seein' as how you an' him an' that black Englishman had your heads together—an' knowin' Williams."

I arose carelessly, affected a yawn and threw myself on to my bunk; a revolver was under the pillow.

"We could divide the reward," I suggested speculatively, casually, without emphasis one way or the other.

Hawkins stood up slowly, fingers in belt. His shadow blotted out the side of the shack, and he said simply:

"You ain't that kind. Nor me. We got to look out for Raikes, though."

I wondered: Did this big fellow have blood on his own hands and think to shelter himself under the leadership of Hurricane Williams; or was he at one with myself, careless of what he did and holding no allegiance to any but those with whom he broke bread? Certainly no innocent, either of us. Certainly not villains either.

I was a wastrel and knew it and did not care—except perhaps when sober. Hawkins was not a ruffian. True, he was not such a simpleton as he appeared. Excitement, the zest for adventure, has made more

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villains than ever bad blood. Not so many perhaps as bad laws—laws hard to obey, and harder to make peace with when broken. And both together have made fewer no doubt than the lash and treadmill of early Australia.

But none of those were my excuse. Williams, indeed Williams had gone so far that the noose dangled above him; more than that he had once dangled from it. And I followed him in a way that probably did not greatly differ, if dogs could speak and explain, from the way a dog follows a master.

It is not easy to explain, or to try to explain. Youth may have had something to do with me, for then I was younger than my years, and for a dozen of them I had been a loafer on beaches, an idler on ships.

And when I first met Williams there had been a glamour about him. It had never wholly vanished, though I often thought he was mad. I gave no heed to right or wrong. Few men did or do.

Williams was strange; ferocious at times, occasionally cruel; but someway, if one understood, never without a certain—not nobility, or dignity, so much as justification. He was almost always moved by something visibly deeper than mere anger; somehow there seemed a *principle*, sensed rather than thought about, from which he never was deflected.

What excuse could Hawkins have for loyalty to Williams? Williams had done a world of things for me. I put it to him bluntly:

"Moore *is* Williams. Why didn't you inform?"

Hawkins fumbled at my pouch on the table, awkwardly filled his mouth with tobacco, spat toward the doorway once or twice, pretended to adjust the candle and brushed to the floor a thick mess of dead and half-dead insects that littered the table. Then:

"Maybe I'm like Raikes. Only I know I wouldn't get a pardon."

"I'm interested." And I was.

"I killed the captain o' the *Fijian Maid*. Stretched me over the main hatch an' served rope-end."

"That's a lie. Papers at Sydney carried an interview with him when he came back from Bundy Bay that time."

Hawkins, unannoyed, unoffended, looked at me. He really seemed to have an absent-minded expression on his big, thick face.

"Just as bad not to kill 'm—since I tried. An' how the —— d'you expect *me* to hide? If I's skinny I'd crawl in a snake-hole. What about Raikes?"

That was no time to quarrel with Hawkins. I did not exactly mistrust him; but it isn't restful to wake up and find a stranger has your secret.

We talked about Raikes. We knew where he was. We knew about what he would be doing . . . When Douglas Moore, who might as well be called by his better known name, Williams—termed "Hurricane," not so much to commemorate any experience with a wild blow, as because of certain personal characteristics—when he, I say, came in shortly before day he found his bunk occupied.

Williams was muddy, wet and two-thirds naked. Hawkins and I were drowsily playing seven-up with dirty dog-eared cards.

"You're Cerberus," I said.

"Who 's he?" demanded Hawkins.

"A big dog that guarded fellows like that." I indicated the bunk at which Williams had been looking. He had then turned questioningly to me.

By agreement Hawkins and I were to play until Williams came. The loser at that time was to be Raikes's guardian.

"He guessed it, skipper," I said to Williams, waving a hand toward the gagged and bound Raikes.

Williams stiffened, and without bending seemed to half-crouch. An attitude that I knew well; and one from which, as if shot by a spring, he could go across a room or deck. He looked at Hawkins, then at me. Hawkins did not notice.

"He was on the *Fijian Maid*," I explained, a glance at Hawkins.

FOR a moment Williams seemed suspicious even of me. A thousand pounds is much money for a loafer, for two loafers, to have within arm's reach.

He turned toward Hawkins. His short questions jerked out answers:

"Her tonnage?"

"Hundred an' fifty," said Hawkins.

"Captain?"

"Carp Taylor."

"Where?"

"Bundy Bay."

"What kind of ship's boat did I come 'longside in?"

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"Native boat it was. Ten niggers. One of 'em had a coconut in his hand."

Williams nearly smiled. He was satisfied that Hawkins had been at Bundy Bay. But it was no coconut the "nigger" held. Had anybody fired on the native boat as it lay alongside that fact would have been discovered, explosively.

Williams turned to the doorway through which the morning light came, and wrote in a little note-book.

"What shall I do with him?" Hawkins asked with accentuated helplessness.

"You know where my razor is?"

"Take off his ears first?"

I sat on a corner of the table and studied the problem. Raikes wasn't much of a problem; one of those men that seem made out of leather, and have been wet and shrunk. His lone eye glared viperously.

"No, I think I would take a chip off his nose. Too long for perfect beauty. Now yours is just about the right length, and shaped like a walnut."

Hawkins lifted my razor from the tin tobacco-box and approached the bunk, took hold of Raikes's nose and held the razor hoveringly.

I stooped over and showed him where to begin cutting. Raikes had quit thinking it might be a joke.

Then Hawkins's big arm was knocked up, half-broken.

I found myself across the shack and sitting on my neck.

Hawkins struck back, but he might as well have hit at a shadow, excepting that no shadow would have returned such a blow as came to his chin. He went over slowly, weakeningly.

"You drunken idiots!" Williams said between hard-set teeth.

I closed the eye that he had not hit and assumed unconsciousness. Hawkins, not unconscious, blinked wonderingly, and looked from around the leg of a table at Williams, who turned again to the doorway and went on with his notes.

We were half-drunk, it is true. But Hawkins showed no anger and held no grudge. Anyway, who knew of Hurricane Williams knew pretty much what to expect at times.

We both turned into our bunks, were asleep, and were shaken out again in what seemed about ten minutes.

"We take her out to-night," Williams said briefly.

There was much to do before then; much too much to do for two weary, sleepless men, one of whom had a headache and a blind eye.

CHAPTER III

NIGHT came, and with it down the road a wagon creaked slowly and stopped before our shack. Two people got down and went into the house. The wagon drove on and followed the road down toward the bay.

At some remote period a hungry wave had taken a bite out of the coast-line, a small bite, and people called it a bay. In a nook of that bay the *Lady Betty* rode her moorings placidly and awaited the judgment of magistrates.

It was toward the bay that the wagon went.

I had no time to notice closely the wagon or the passengers.

I was busily acting as a host. Hawkins should have been assisting. But he was acting as a guest. When there was anything to eat and drink he slipped into that rôle and stayed there.

There was much to drink; there was more to eat. Whole legs of mutton were roasting on an open oven, and bottled ale was to be had by reaching out and tightening the fingers. More came than were invited, but there was plenty for all; that is, plenty to eat. I served no strong liquors. They were carefully packed in a small barrel, and that barrel, I thought, was going aboard the *Lady Betty* just as surely as I did.

So were our guests going aboard. They did not know it. Had the secret been whispered to them some if not many would have slipped away and babbled. They would learn in time. Now they were being pampered. Salt horse and biscuits were to follow.

Well fed and inwardly warmed, men are always easier to handle. They fall in with suggestions. Precious little good it would have done them to fall out. Williams had need of them.

Around on the ground a dozen men squatted. Rough fellows, rough of voice, manner, clothes and hands; loud and free with their words. Most of them were in boots. They puffed their pipes and drank, talked loud, and carved into the browned, sweet, juicy legs dropped on the fresh plank before them.

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All afternoon a cook, lured from a steady job by one day's high wage, had been at work. He was drunk as a cook should be; but his meat was done to the turn. A mound of sliced cabbage, soaked in soured wine and salted, was disappearing down voracious throats; and hot potatoes prodded out from under the ashes were opened and stuffed with butter.

I was to see that no man who might be useful on board the *Lady Betty* got uselessly drunk. I thought the cook was useful and he was already drunk; but he had been at it all afternoon.

Yet I was to see that no man noticed that he was not getting all he wanted to drink. I did it by being free with the ale and reserving the gin and rum for myself. Hawkins could die of thirst at sea before I would surrender a drop He was entertaining himself with the story of his life, and relating how he worked up from cabin-boy to captain. Nobody believed him; but for all anybody knew he was paying for the feast. so many were attentive.

Others talked for themselves:

"Over on the Turon I washed out——"

"I seed 'em nigger swim un'er ducks an' pull 'em down by the laigs——"

"Believe me 'r not, them Burrendong nuggets was big as——"

"The heller took it broadside an' carried away the pipe fr'm 'tween my teeth—an' me in the crow's-nest, mindju!"

Somebody was trying to sing, and that unfortunately reminded Hawkins. He had a voice. I had told him earnestly that it was like the braying of a bull. A deep, roaring voice it was, and he lifted it up—or rather lowered it, for the louder he talked the deeper it seemed to come from his cavernous belly—in a chorus of:

"An' when we go to hell—to hell—
An' when our souls they take,
We'll hoist the skull an' cross-b-on-es
An' sail the Sulfur Lake!"

"You'll get your neck hoisted to a yard-arm, you make any noise like that above some ships. I know," I mumbled into his ear.

"Say, Red-Top," he retorted aloud, very much aloud, "how *did* you get that eye spotted?"

And many fellows laughed.

One caught at my arm and asked if I'd seen Raikes.

Raikes, for sake-keeping, was stored under a bunk inside the house. I had forgotten about him. Hawkins, encouraged by those about him who knew nothing of harmony, was singing again:

"Fill' 'er t' th' brim or fill 'er higher,
Fill 'er with rum or fill 'er with fire,
An' I'll drink 'er down—drink 'er down!"

Under the noise I whispered confidentially:

"Shh-hh! Raikes met a couple of fellows yesterday. He's hiding out."

The man nodded sympathetically.

That was how I came to be reminded that I had forgotten to feed Raikes.

I heaped up a tin plate with whatever was in sight. Williams—there never was such a man for remembering trifles—had told me to be sure to feed Raikes. I stuck a bottle of ale under each arm and went across, some hundred yards (for we didn't want the noisy barbecue too closely associated with our house) to the shack.

It was dark inside. Though I knew my way about as well as a rat knows a butter-tub, I had my hands full and did stumble a bit, just as I was saying, "Here, old Raikes, crawl out from—" and having stumbled, I swore a little.

A woman's voice, scornfully, bitterly—

"Drunken beast!"

HOLDING a candle above my head I peered at the two dark, cloaked figures; the Englishman Davenant and his daughter, so-called.

Perhaps I was a little unsteady. For one thing it was a surprize; and maybe I was nervous.

And I had no way of knowing how I appeared to them; nor did I realize at the time that my brick-dust hair was thrusting itself at all angles. Throughout the afternoon I had been around a fire, all evening handling greasy meats, and as the mosquitoes were about my hands had been many times to my face. I was grimy and greased. Also my eyes were discolored, and one was quite closed.

Having only one eye to use, logically it took longer than it would otherwise. I had a hard time believing that one eye.

She was too—I shall not say beautiful. She was more distinctive than that. I had read some place—Williams contrived always to have books about, though most of them

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were worthless technical things—as I was saying, I had read some place that wicked women look their best in artificial light. If that were true, then she must be a daughter of the devil himself.

Women were about as common as cocoanuts; one found them every place. All kinds, excepting such as she. Stockmen's wives and daughters; squatters' wives, daughters and aunts; in towns there were always the disdainful, corseted wives and daughters of officials; and not counting natives—who were often ugly as the white ladies—there were plenty of women besides those mentioned. "Unmentionables," I believe they are sometimes called.

She differed from all of them.

She and Davenant in uneasy impatience had chosen to sit in the dark that they might the better be unnoticed until Williams returned.

The cloak enveloped her like folded raven wings. Her pale face with an imperious tilt met my stupid gaze. Black her eyes, and bright. Her fingers, lifted up and touching her cheek, were long, and rings glistened on them.

The face seemed rather long and the outline of the forehead, cheeks and chin was uneven, though her nose was straight and thin. The brows were straight and black, the lashes long. A delicate face, but not sickly.

I had thought that women's mouths were all alike until I saw hers; it was wide, and expressive even in repose. She looked at me unalarmed, unembarrassed; but she evidently decided that I would not grow tired of staring.

At last she asked with repressed, stinging bitterness if she were the first woman I had ever seen.

"Yes 'um, the first houri!"

A faint ripple of disdainful amusement ran soundlessly along her lips. She was not displeased.

I turned toward Davenant. He was staring at me in a sort of detached, impersonal, chilly sullenness. It was his way.

I dabbed the table with grease and stuck the candle upright and became the affable host, telling them they should have made themselves at home, lighted up, or even come down to the banquet. No doubt they had heard it. She nodded remotely. She heard it, and evidently she would just as soon not have heard it.

I asked them to excuse me for a minute as I had to feed Raikes, and requested the lady to lift her legs or move across the room.

Slowly, as if questioning my senses, she gathered her skirts and raised her feet on to the bunk where she was sitting.

"Come on, Raikesy old boy. We've got company. Too bad you had a rag in your mug." And I rolled him out.

"Have to watch him," I explained to her. "He might bite. Rather think he will. I forgot to feed 'im. Better not listen, 'cause he's likely to say awful swear-words."

I loosened Raikes's gag, but he was silent. He did not so much as look at the woman or man. I glanced at them. They were looking, each at the other; they had not known there was anybody within ear-shot.

I loosened Raikes's hands, and he began eating wolfishly. Before, every time the man had had a chance to talk he had done so with vicious threats and curses. Not the presence of a woman would humble him. I knew that.

We were all strainedly silent.

At last she asked who he was.

"We're shanghai-ing him. Only sailor in port. Isn't much to look at, but you ought to hear him cuss. A real sailor."

She paid no attention to what I said, but looked intently at the blind profile of Raikes.

"That man shall not go with us," Davenant declared firmly.

"Indeed not!" she added decisively, meaningly.

"That's something you'll have to talk over with somebody that knows something about it," I said.

Raikes greedily guzzled from a bottle and, otherwise silent, kept his face averted.

A fine situation: Raikes had overheard something that made them determined that he should not go with the *Lady Betty;* but having heard, he no doubt knew where the *Lady Betty* was going with Hurricane Williams, and could follow—probably would, I guessed, in a gunboat—and get both reward and vengeance.

They did not know that Douglas Moore was Hurricane Williams. Raikes did by this time, or suspected it strongly. I did not know whether or not Williams cared to have the Davenants find it out. The chances were that at sea he would not care.

There were other things for me to attend. I trussed Raikes up again. He did not

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resist as usual. I rolled him out of sight under the bunk, though there was really no need to—yet one could never tell who might drop in casually and ask questions.

In answer to Davenant's impatient demand to know when Douglas Moore would be back, I shook a non-committal head. I went out into the warm night. Hawkins was still singing. There was much effort about it. I would have to remind him that vocal efforts on a loaded stomach were harmful to the voice.

But the world was not the same to me. I had looked upon Lilith—or somebody like her. I could not get that woman's face or voice out of my mind. I was bothered, fretted. I wished that I had been in Raikes's place, and listened.

SOMEBODY was spinning a yarn. If there is truthfulness in wine I do not know what there is in ale. Perhaps the fellow was not wholly lying. Anyway, he had the attention of us all. He had been shipwrecked; there were five of them in the boat; they were dying of hunger and thirst; the usual rains had fallen from time to time, so that they sucked their shirts and eased parched tongues; as usual in stories of the kind somebody must be eaten, and he had discovered that by common consent he was to be the victim when—Williams appeared.

He was bare from the waist up. A long knife—and he knew how to use it—hung at his left side. He was wet.

"How many of you men want to go to sea, *now?*"

His voice was hard. He stood sternly looking from one to another in a way that wouldn't tempt many men to say "Yes," but would make the perceptive ones cautious of saying "No."

Three or four stood up, among them Hawkins.

"You fellows ain't goin' throw me down like this, are you?" Hawkins exclaimed.

I expected to hear from Williams at that. It was best to let him run things in his own way when he started. He said nothing. Two or three more stood up, mumbling something about not knowing it was Hawkins they were going with.

"Take them to the beach," said Williams to Hawkins.

They stumbled away, Hawkins heartily in the lead.

"McGuire!"

"Yes, sir."

"Armed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Shoot the man that moves."

"Yes, sir."

I pulled the revolver from under my shirt. Williams walked hurriedly toward the shack.

I told the men that I was sorry—which I wasn't—but that trouble was in the air:

"Ground's cold an' worms 'll make their beds in your marrow-bones—if you move. Who'll be the first to doubt I can hit 'im in the back at twenty paces? No? Well, I can't—so I won't wait for anybody to get that far away."

It wasn't my presence, my armed attitude, my chatter, that kept them to the ground. They had heard Williams. He was convincing. Someway even I could do brave things if Williams told me to, or if he stood and watched.

Not that holding a few men, unarmed men, in a ragged circle was brave. Possibly they wouldn't have remained if they had known what was ahead for some of them during the next few months.

Presently came footsteps, and figures emerged from the shadows; Raikes in the lead, carrying the light bundle of personal effects of his own which Williams had had me make up for him; behind him, Williams; then Davenant and the woman.

"Stand up," said Williams.

Some stood up at once; some dragged themselves up reluctantly. Two sat still. I tried to convey good advice by unobtrusive gestures, but the two stubborn men did not see or heed. Williams did not repeat orders.

He grabbed the man nearest to him by the hair and jerked him forward. The man got up quickly enough. He arose with his arms flying like flails; and went down—knocked flat to his back.

The other man was on his feet when Williams looked around.

It had happened in clipped seconds.

The first fellow arose sullenly, perhaps wondering if it had been a club.

Face to back they were placed, hands on the shoulders in front, and Williams by the side of the line and I at the rear. Raikes was front man. It seemed that Raikes *was* going on the *Lady Betty*.

Down to the beach at midnight we

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marched, silent except for heavy steps.

Experience had taught Williams how easily men could be cowed if one got the "jump" on them. Though I doubt if he gave a thought to what constituted the jump. When he wanted something done it had to be done.

Williams had already been on board the *Lady Betty*. The three watchmen—one, I believe, placed there by the court; one by some chandler; and one—I don't know whom he represented. Possibly the A.B.A. Anyway the three of them had met Williams, and were lying quietly alongside the galley listening to the gentle splash of the outward tide that pulled at the *Lady Betty* as if to take her with it.

For one flickering minute it looked as if the men would have trouble on the beach. They began to talk, to ask questions, to protest.

Encouraged by Williams's ominous silence, they began to seem aggressive. They were freemen. They were British subjects —most of them. They were going to do this and not do that, and the constables, the troopers, the magistrates, the governor, the Prime Minister, the Queen should hear of it!

"Stow that, you loons," cried a hard, rasping voice. "He's Hurricane Williams!"

Raikes had told it. In a moment of excited, generous warning he had blurted the name.

A sudden hush, a craning of necks and bulging of eyes, came over them. Hurricane Williams, renegade, pirate, cannibal—anything at all—was another person than the mere bullying stranger they had thought him.

The woman in French exclaimed, "Mother of God!" Davenant exploded a "What!" and followed it with a "You don't say!"

Williams ignored the mention of his name. But I wonder whether he was not thrilled by its magic; secretly a little proud of the awe. After all, the man must have been more human than he appeared. Or else he was mad, mad.

THERE was no wharf. Boats landed on the beach. Williams "borrowed" the three in sight, including a large flat-bottom punt-like thing owned by some Chinamen. The wagon that had brought Davenant and the woman was just above the sand, where the driver had camped. The wagon was filled with boxes and bundles, some of them taken on at our shack; and the men, herded by Williams, Hawkins and me, carried them to the beach and filled the boats.

Williams put eight men at the oars of the first boat and made off, towing the others. Hawkins was in the second. I was in the last with Davenant and the woman.

"Is that man really Hurricane Williams?" she asked me in a way that conveyed a very strong personal interest.

"Can't say for sure. But I never heard him deny it."

"What sort of man is he really?" asked Davenant.

"Asleep he's just like anybody else. Only he don't sleep much."

"And awake?" she asked feverishly.

"He don't let nobody else sleep. Easy man to get acquainted with. Very. All you have to do is shake your head when he tells you to do something. But I got a flour-barrel half full of gin and rum hid over there, and how am I going to get it?"

She asked more questions. Questions are the easiest things in the world to ask. There was a kind of tense curiosity in her tones, but her manner was cold. She was interested, but she did not want to appear to be.

I told her something in confidence, strict confidence, for I didn't see any reason why she should sleep that night, any more than the rest of us. Yes, Williams was a terrible man.

Had she noticed that knife? Look out for that knife. Williams had an idea that the knife would die of thirst if it didn't drink blood every few days. It was too dark or I would show scars of where the knife had bit me—*while I was asleep.*

I whispered that to her in the tone always used by the hero in furtively warning the pretty girl on the blood-drenched boards of Sydney theaters.

"McGuire, look out!" Williams called at me.

I gave the steering-oar a swirl and brought our boat gunwale to gunwale alongside of Hawkins, who laid by the overgrown sampan. Williams leaped up the low free-board of the *Lady Betty* and called four of the men. They went slowly.

"With a will there," he warned them. "Man that windlass."

He had not wasted his time when on the *Lady Betty* early in the evening. The gear

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was set, block and tackle bent to yard, and in no time at all the heavier boxes were jerked up to the deck. All was clear, and all of us were on deck.

In the hurly-burly of work somebody snatched at a fife-rail and struck Williams a crushing blow from behind. I saw it too late to interfere. It was the man who had first refused to move from the fire, and he struck with a belaying-pin.

Williams reeled forward, half-fell and came up, facing about—and hit, knife in hand; but it was the butt of the handle that he drove into the fellow's face. Seeing the fight was on, others had crouched to rush Williams.

I suppose I would have shot, but Hawkins got in my way. I could not see exactly what he did, for his back was the kind that cuts out all view of what goes on in front; but I had the impression that his two massive arms had reached in a sort of all-embracing circle; and the sharp crack as of husked coconuts striking together made me think that some heads had come one against another. Anyway quiet followed.

Williams stood for a moment above the groaning man he had knocked flat. He was half-stooping and trembled almost drunkenly as he looked down with distorted face. But he said nothing. He did nothing.

I was almost frozen for those five or six seconds, as I was always more or less frozen when I saw him in a temper. The temper that made him a thunderbolt of suddenness, once loosened, was—or would have been in any other man—uncontrollable.

He straightened and turned away; a hand lifted to his neck where the pin had caught him; then his hand dropped. It must have hurt. But there was work to do.

I was sent to the wheel, near where the woman and Davenant stood in lonesome uncertainty, made a little uneasy by the clatter and movement forward. Backs bent to the windlass, the anchors were pulled up, and the *Lady Betty* floated free in a strong outward tide. But she had yet to be warped clear of the bay, else likely as not she would put her nose into a sand-bank and hold us there for the enraged magistrates.

WILLIAMS lined the crew aft and talked to them for about forty seconds. In that time he told them he had nothing to offer but good wages and plenty of work, with the chance of their necks getting pulled by hemp if they stayed with him; but he would put down in the log that they were pressed men—which might do them some good. All who were willing to chance it, one step to the front.

One man stepped out. Raikes.

"I want at least eight men. Four pounds a month and fifty pounds bonus," he said.

Three more stepped out, one of them Raulson, the cook, who had been caught in the general shanghai-ing.

The other four were forcible selected.

"We'll be in Broome in two weeks," he said carelessly, encouragingly.

There was never another captain like him. I have heard about many, read of some and sailed with a few. He always did most of the work. He would do almost anything but cook and scrub. He was all over the ship at all hours of the day and night, below and aloft, adjusting, inspecting, measuring.

Men said he was crazy. Perhaps that was because he never gave the wiliest a chance to soldier. He was a slave-driver and crank. Everything must be tidy and stout, veritably shipshape.

But there was method in his madness. When a reward is on a skipper's head every inch of canvas must catch wind and pull, every line, brace and clew hold, the running rigging render, and the standing rigging stand, any pressure.

Williams had them break out a hundred-fathom hawser; and, bending an end to the knightheads, tumbled a dozen men—including the three watchmen, loosened from their bonds to assist their charge in running away from them—into the Chinese punt, and, getting in himself, revolver in hand, they rowed out to warp the ship on her way.

Raikes and another fellow who knew his fingers from a gasket were working aloft, making ready to sheet home, soon as we could catch the wind. A good land breeze usually came up about this time; and soon as Williams rounded a sand-bar that lay across the *Lady Betty's* bow—his fishing-lines had made good leads to give him soundings—he came, swimming and pulling himself along the hawser, on board and shook out the canvas, then took the wheel himself. But he kept that boat-load of towers at the end of the hawsers, and pulling.

They had warning to keep that hawser tight or a rifle would open on them; and if they cast off and tried to escape some of them would likely enough be shot. There

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wasn't much light, but they were frightened.

A mile or more out when the wind freshened stiffly we came atop them, and a frightened lot they were. Williams took back the four pressed men, who looked as if they might be, or be made into, sailors, and turned the others loose that were in the boat, to make their way to land. Against the tide they would not be able to reach land and give the alarm for at least four or five hours.

So the *Lady Betty* was off, but there was no rest for the weary. Not even for me, who bemoaned my flour-barrel half full of good inspiriting liquor left on shore. Not even for Davenant, who found that an owner didn't amount to much on a ship with Williams as skipper. Ours was certainly a piratical-looking ship if ever one went to sea, or rather piratical-acting.

A fellow was found who said he knew how to steer. He did a bit. Davenant was given a revolver and told to shoot him if he left that wheel or if any other man came on to the poop. Davenant sat on a case of rifles and took the situation composedly; and Miss Davenant refused to go below. Perhaps she was a bit alarmed. More likely, since I came to know her a little better, she was fascinated by the grim romance of it all, the eery feeling of danger, the slapping and dash and oaths of the men at work in the darkness.

The ship was light ballasted, a little too light in fact, but he put on every yard of canvas that could be hung; and working in the dark on a strange ship—though Williams had explored her pretty carefully, and knew sailing-ships from mizzen-truck to flying jib—it was no child's play to run out booms and clew down the studding-sails. And it was practically useless to give orders, for Raikes, Hawkins and I were about the only ones who knew what they meant. Hawkins could no more go aloft than he could go through the eye of a needle; but he was as good as a windlass.

It was a foolish thing to carry so much sail with a worthless crew, for if a blow had hit us we would have been left to swim for it. But Williams was in a hurry; and taking it after sail was set he did not leave the wheel himself for six hours. The fellow wasn't human when it came to work, to driving himself.

There was no division into watches. The men slept on the decks, and I with them, jumping up—it seemed—every ten minutes to pull here and slacken there. Straight south we headed, which certainly wasn't toward Broome. He expected that he would be searched for in that direction.

I WISH I might have nothing to remember of the next few weeks. I had heard of the Tasmanian sea, but it was my first meeting with it. None of us had been there before. I did my best to be seasick and some succeeded better than I. Except for the strain and danger it would have been unpleasantly amusing.

The brig bobbed along like a drunken sailor in an earthquake. We carried too much sail, and the *Lady Betty* was light-headed anyway; and we were caught in the ragged ends of the great waves that roll endlessly below Tasmania, waves that stormlessly rise to forty and fifty feet, and I have heard various liars estimate their length. A hundred mile, say some. As if they knew. There is nothing to stop either the waves or the liars.

And though we made headway in fine shape it seemed as if we were plowing through a war of mill-races. We bobbed like an egg-shell in a tub of boiling water; and were close-hauled at that. And because I was supposed to know how to steer, Williams shortly after dawn gave the wheel to me, snarling, "Full-and-by."

The forecastle was awash, and it looked to me as if the *Lady Betty* was doing her best to head on for the bottom. Frustrated again and again, she dipped her nose under, and I would swear—though not very emphatically—that I felt the rudder clear a time or two. The ballast wasn't right in the first place, and to take our thoughts from other troubles it shifted, and the starboard rail was awash.

That was too much for even Williams. Besides, we had raised land, and were well out of the path of the Bass Strait shipping. Sail was taken in forward and aft, and we drifted along under the mainsail; but it did not help much. The crank seemed determined to go to the bottom; if she couldn't go on her head she would go on her weather side. But there wasn't a chance. If she was too light to sail she was too light to sink, though she was about two-thirds under water a third of the time.

All about us and over the deck the sea

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boiled, churned and streaked. The water ran around over the deck as if looking for a low coaming to climb over.

With my bare toes gripping the grating I reflected that the law-abider has all the best of it. He has too. He may not have so much that is interesting to remember in his old age—but he stands a better chance of reaching old age.

Still, after a fashion we went on. Raulson, the cook, his long mustache adroop pathetically, brought me a can of coffee. I was touched by this attention—prematurely; for he whispered to know if I did not have a bit of bottle stowed some place.

I assured him that I did—in one of his fire-holes. He said that I did not. He had helped himself to a bottle or so when I wasn't looking; but later when he had gone for more barrel and all had vanished.

"Then Williams spotted it," I said to myself wonderingly. Raulson tried to tell me the story of his life, probably seeking some sort of confessional and absolution, for he was convinced that the crazy buoy which some fool had named a *Lady* was never to reach land.

But there was the land off our port bow. Whole piles of it, rock-ribbed and lined with beaches as if they had been the burial ground for enormous giants, whose bones the vulturous waves had picked. The white-bodied, black-tipped albatross snooped friendlily about as if to inspect us. They seemed to know that we were in a mess, and were disdainful of our company.

After inspection they floated off with broad, contemptuous flaps. Some sailors say they bring good luck; and I suppose when they wheel away they carry it with them.

Pigeons flocked overhead, bound northward as if to tell where the *Lady Betty* was. Fish would have made better messengers, as they could see more of her. It was chilly, too, with the wind from the tropics at our back. I could barely peep from my swollen eye.

Williams came up the companion and stood for a time slowly turning around the horizon. His face was worn. The muscles from his bare neck and jaw were tight, tense, standing out like braided leather. He looked at me, seemed to recognize me as somebody he knew and said bitterly:

"We're short of food. If you think this is bad, wait."

It happened that plenty of provisions had been placed on the *Lady Betty*, but after she got into litigation the perishables were removed. And Williams had scant chance of provisioning a ship, especially in that part of the world. If he put into port he would likely be nabbed. All of us would be nabbed.

There are some things even worse than starving. I have my doubts, however, about a more distressing condition than thirst, my kind of a thirst.

Miss Davenant came on deck. She must have been having a time of it, for she was very pale. Seasickness makes a woman look her worst; but it hadn't succeeded with her. Her face was thin and peaked. But she was neat.

Her black hair was brushed and caught low on the sides of her head, and pendent earrings—green—swung defiantly from her half-hidden ears. She wore a long cloak. I was ignored.

She braced herself against the boom and stared forward. I watched her and learned nothing; merely confirmed the former impression that she was beautiful without looking at all like other beautiful women. Her face was too thin and uneven to be pretty—theoretically. There was a strangeness about it, as if the Maker of Women had fashioned a new type.

She had the quietness and poise that are disconcerting to me, the impenetrableness of one who lives behind a mask. She was watching the men housing the masts, or seemed to be. I came to know that she seldom watched any but one man.

WILLIAMS was after a beach to careen. It seemed to me, gazing at the hard, rocky cliffs, that he might as well have been looking for a dry spot on the ocean's floor. The scenic effect was splendid and disquieting.

The west coast of Tasmania was, and probably still is, wild and unsettled. Perhaps it was then wild as when the first Dutchman found it, and scarcely more visited. Gunboats or steamers would never search for Williams there, because no man of sense would buck the Tasmanian seas in a wind-jammer.

South of Tasmania, the great waves roll on, always toward the east. And Williams was supposed to want to beat his way westward. He would never have gone down in those seas to do it.

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There is no use in telling what I thought. Williams did find a beach, exposed it is true, and very different from the long, gentle, hard slopes of the Samoans. It served his purpose. With men in boats casting leads and leading the way, he went up through a narrow channel of giants' bones at high tide; and then—we worked like dogs, like the convicts themselves formerly thrown on to the island and girdled with blood-hounds.

Breaming and boot-topping, Raikes called it—the cleaning of the *Lady Betty's* stomach. I called it something different. I raided the medicine-chest and found three bottles of whisky and some other stuff that smelled and tasted a little alcoholic. But it did not go far.

Chipping barnacles and smearing tallow and pounding copper is the sort of work bad sailors have to do when they die. Those who have had as much of it as men do who sailed with Williams will sit in heavenly taverns and work jaw-tackle, and the slated accounts will be wiped out by an invisible sponge.

I passed the bottles around—when Williams wasn't looking. He probably knew. There was little he didn't know about what went on; but there were times when he did not care what else was done as long as work went on.

Work did go on. He did most of it. Tireless and short-tongued, he kept at it—and kept us at it. The *Lady Betty* lost her name, but unfortunately not her sex. I don't believe she ever belonged to the A. B. A. *O. P. Jones* could never have acted like that. She became the *Sally Martin*, and was freshened with white paint; and black gun-ports were painted on. That was the usual trick of Williams. If hailed he would sing out that he was bound for or leaving some Chinese port. Painted ports were as good as guns in keeping off the pirates in Chinese waters, if they didn't come too close.

As usual, again, when he had got hold of a ship known to the authorities, he set about disguising her completely, and the brig was re-rigged into a fore-and-after. For one thing she would be easier manned; for another the *Lady Betty* had never any business being a hermaphrodite brig. Most important, however, was the disguise.

Williams was sailmaker, carpenter, bosun and captain all in one. From dark to dawn he worked.

It would not be truthful to say that the men came to like him. People never liked Williams. He seemed always repressedly truculent. He was seldom in a rage, and then was very quiet about it; but appeared always on the verge of blowing up. His temper was dangerous, but it was not a noisy temper.

The fellows did admire him as well as fear him. He drove brutally but impersonally. And there were no favorites, which disappointed me.

Little Raikes was a surprize. Without having anybody give him the authority he gradually assumed the position of mate—and kept it. He would not have kept it had he not been a worker himself. He was, and a good one. He couldn't have done more if he had an interest in the boat.

But why, I wondered. I tried to talk with him. He had nothing to say. He did not appear to retain a grudge against me.

I would have given much of what little I had to know what he had overheard from his place under the bunk. But he denied having heard anything. This world is full of liars.

Hawkins, hearty and less awkward than he looked, did much to keep the fellows' spirits up; or rather to keep them from going lower. We lay under a wall of rock that had been broken and splintered as if from a Titan's hammer, and the sun did not touch us until afternoon, when he struck glittering and warmless; and falling farther westward, threw a dazzling sheen from the black wet rocks as if the rays struck mirrors.

At low tide the green-gray and blackened bulk of the larger boulders was exposed, cluttered with shell and weed-growth, and making the scene even more somber than when the tide had thrust itself up and around the sand, nosing between rocks and overspreading like a sentient invader. There was nothing to buoy the spirit in that drear, forlorn place, as for instance in warmer seas where sky and water and rocks wear colors, and flower-studded foliage thrusts out with prodigal eagerness to give radiance to the eyes; where the huge-topped coconuts droop their feathery leaves, and a soft warm purple haze lies like a misty mantle over the distant islands.

Here we lay at the foot of a bleak, wet cliff; over the brow shrubs and trees bent,

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many with roots adangle and groping as if frantically trying to save themselves from being crowded off and over. The forest above and behind us was impenetrable, thickly overgrown and matted with a hardy plant-life that had little of the generous nut-bearing and flower-offerings of the tropic foliage.

As the men worked their blows were cast back with hollow echoes from the cliff, and lifted voices returned to them with mocking repetition. Too, there was the disquieting fact of being about work against their wills; bound on a voyage to—they knew not where; and likely to suffer—they knew not what.

Moreover, there was not all anybody wanted to eat. Salt meat and biscuits, with a tincture of potato, now and then the flavor of boiled ham, and occasionally some canned stuff, with, as a special rarity, a bite of cheese, were about all we had. Coffee and tea were ready at all hours; and Williams said that they should be hot. They were.

DAVENANT had to eat the same fare. That made it taste a little better to the rest of us; and it made the work a bit lighter to me to discover him working a bit.

I overheard Williams telling him that he could, if he preferred, do no work; in which case he could tighten his belt for his breakfast. Davenant flared, and when he used up much of his temper he found the proposition unaltered. He protested that he was the owner; and was told—

"You are merely a fellow thief."

The fact that Davenant did not own the *Lady Betty*, no matter how honest his original intentions may have been, put him in much the same state of piracy with Williams, and he had to earn his berth.

Miss Davenant moved about in a kind of stately isolation. She did not complain. She seemed interested. She watched with a sort of tense breathlessness when there was some hard, dangerous work going on; and most of the day alone, remote, she spent on deck and was somehow always out of the way.

Occasionally she would speak to some one of the men briefly, impersonally, just a word, a question; and maybe smile. But the smile meant nothing except a frank reward. Yet I wondered if she knew how much she did toward making the work easier for an hour or two. It is strange how much women do know.

I watched her at all times when I could steal a view. So quiet and so purposeful she seemed in her inaction.

There was nothing fretful in her attitude, no sour petulance, and still no lowering of reserve; and whatever I may have of intuition told me that she was a woman who had no scruples and no innocence; yet she was pleasant-voiced, steady of eyes.

"A daughter of the devil," I repeated to myself, pleased with the alliteration and offering myself an explanation of the markedly strange personality that was not, for all of her reserve—or perhaps was heightened by it—without a certain deep, evasive, sinister suggestion.

I say that I liked her. I say that for lack of the gift to convey a more subtle accuracy of the way she attracted me.

I had not altogether heard her speak a hundred words; I had seen her, except for the minute or two in the light of the candle the first time we met, only in attitudes that were undistinctive. But there was something strange, fierce, audacious, inside of her that looked out through her black eyes—eyes black as if darkened by veils to hide the woman crouched alertly, patiently, behind the mask and complexion of mere Miss Davenant.

She ignored me altogether. Probably because without looking directly at me she knew that I watched her. Such detection is a gift peculiarly feminine.

Williams by neither word, gesture nor glance seemed to know that she was on the boat. But her eyes when he was on deck were seldom off him.

CHAPTER IV

O. P. JONES himself, had he not departed this troublous life and perhaps come into certain ghostly advantages for spying, could not have recognized the *Sally Martin* when she was re-rigged. If one did not know her with that disillusioning intimacy that comes from putting a paint-brush over her timbers, a good opinion might have been formed of her. She looked all right.

But the feel of her was disquieting. From keelson to truck, from forecastle to cabin, from stem to rudder, she was worked over.

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Trim and safe and speedy was her appearance. Her bow was sharp and her buttocks tumbled home sharply. It was probably because of her lines that she had been kidnaped in the first place.

Williams had an eye for boat-beauty, as other men have for the next most feminine thing, a woman.

I have a preference for the ark-like ship, high out of the water; and if it needs two guesses to tell her stern from her bow, I like her the better. She may ride the sea like a sailor on horseback and be stupid at her helm, but she won't be headstrong and full of the devil.

Sally Martin was reasonably behaved while she lay on the beach, turning from one side to the other like a lazy lady in the hands of slaves. But we had to take her out unballasted, stern on.

And she objected. She was warped first in one direction, then the other, for there were rocks all about; and there was no chance to turn her around on the boulder-bound beach. She had been practically embayed by rocks.

She hung back and tugged like a calf at the end of a rope. She was indignant at being hauled out by her heels. Finding herself unable to shake her bow loose from a running hawser that played over her stem, she swayed from side to side, determined to smash her hull timbers.

She nearly succeeded, too. She did succeed in getting stuck, coming against a rock—but too gently to serve her purpose, being held by the pay of the cable over her bow. Nothing was damaged but some twelve hours of time.

It was almost impossible and it was dangerous to lie at work near that beach. The surf swirled and leaped, the waves—thick-bodied and high-crested—smote the rocks and flung their spray as if tossed upward from giant hands; and the surface of the water was boiling foam.

We took on rock ballast and stowed it—under Williams's eyes—and overlaid the ballast with timber. Our hands were torn and raw, our backs ached, our hearts were heavy, our stomachs light. There were no watches and no sleep, for when the sun went down lanterns came out.

A dozen times a day almost any one of the men could have killed Williams; he was back to them and often head down, working as hard, harder than any. Something more than fear of him held them to a weary dog's life.

Perhaps they realized that without him there would be small chance of getting off that desolate coast; but that was less true than that they admired him, even though they hated him. I hated him myself. Hawkins, puffing like that well-known puffer, the porpoise, said that he would personally add a pound or so to the reward for his capture—he was that tired of work. We talked disconsolately of the half-filled flour-barrel I had stowed in the fire-hole.

Williams in almost every turn and move disclosed a remarkable knowledge of work. He seemed to know even the weight of a stone at a glance; in the same way he seemed to know measurements and capacities; and without a moment's hesitation he could tell what and how to do anything about shipwork.

He showed no apparent attention toward anybody. A man might be dying without Williams saying a word to him. He noticed though. Try malingering and one would see how quickly he noticed. I had seen him stay by a sick native all night. Also I saw him send white men, tottering from weariness, to bear a hand at heavy hauling. He was heartless.

But at the first sign of weakness from him every man on the ship would have instantly become sick. I should have. I would gladly have lain down on a deathbed just for the chance of a bit of rest; but not at the risk of being yanked up by the ears.

Fresh water, tea and coffee, we had in plenty. Wood was the only thing we found on the island to carry away. It had been cut above the cliff and thrown down. Some of the men had thought about running away, but they were wisely afraid of taking to the strange forest with no station or settlement on the coast. But with plenty of wood our condensers filled casks as fast as they were emptied.

AT LAST we sailed, dropping away before a light, steady wind that blew south, and when we had plenty of sea-room we changed course and began beating northward.

Naturally we got into rough weather, for nothing else could be expected with a dozen Jonahs aboard. Cold slaty clouds

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came low in the heavens. The rain swept us like a fusillade. The winds boomed and thundered. Each time we went about we were nearly capsized.

We bucked a heavy sea for two days and a night, with me at the helm most of the night—or it seemed like it anyway—and I was so soused with coffee that I couldn't sleep for another day and night.

Williams was on deck practically all of the time. I swear what sleep he got was standing, eyes open, on the weather side, staring into the rigging. He was stubborn as Vanderdecken. Whether, like that Flying Dutchman, always beaten back at the Cape, he had cursed God, I do not know; but he never cursed man, wind, sea or luck. He was a lunatic. One of the kind that seldom fail at anything to which his will is set.

IT WAS —— and I was sober; and we were bearing for the Bass Strait. Not even a miracle would take us through without being sighted. But why care? Besides, nobody would expect Williams to sail in that direction.

I went to him. I could stand it no longer. He was working with a book of sailing-directions before him—sailing-directions for the lower coast of China, Java and the Malay Peninsula, and he ponderingly made notations which he afterward wrote into a virgin log-book.

I was desperate.

"Listen," I said. "I don't care anything about where we are going. I don't care anything about what we have to eat. And the other men are about the same. But we want something to drink and we have to have some sleep. There's not going to be anything left but ghosts to work your ship for you if this keeps up."

"Did the forecastle send you?"

"No. And you know I've got too much sense to admit it if they did."

Without a word he got up, unlocked a sea-chest, lifted the lid. There was bottle on bottle of rum and gin.

A gleam, that I may have misinterpreted as a gleam of amusement, was in his eyes as he said, jerking phrases out, that I had forgotten it. That he had had it sent down to the beach in the wagon.

That liquor was always good for trade—implying with a glance and a gesture, "If I can keep your hands off it." He said, however, that I could help myself the day I found out what Davenant and the woman were after at Dakaru.

"And why does she stare at me?" he snapped, as if I had something to do with it.

"Does she?" My voice was innocence itself.

"Her eyes are like beaks."

I had no sense to say it, but words were always slipping out—truthful words.

"I think them more like black opals."

His answer was a short, throaty growl. A pause. Then he spoke harshly:

"Raikes knows. I don't want to hang him up by the thumbs. He's a good sailor. Not to be trusted—bad shipmate. But *you* find out. A woman always talks—if she's giving away somebody's secret."

"Now listen, skipper," I pleaded. "Just a nip or two, you know. You can't expect a sober man to talk to a woman like that."

I must have mistaken that gleam that I had seen in his eyes. It wasn't amusement. It was anger. It came back again, and words with it. He did not raise his voice. His words were hard and dry, and snapped like the breaking of sticks.

I was a drunken wastrel. A club to drive and a bottle to lure were the things that had an influence on me. But at least I didn't have the mark of Judas in my hand.

Find out why they were going to Dakaru—and I could get drunk, drunk like the beast I like to be. Williams said—

"I know why *I* am going to Dakaru."

"Grahame?"

"Yes, Grahame. But not what you think."

And I didn't know what to think by the way he said it.

But I must find out what they were up to. Davenant, he said, was dark and deep and sinister.

"Coldly evil," were the words, and he put meaning into them. So much meaning that a nervous little thrill ran through me.

"The woman——"

He did not finish. But I knew he felt the curse of the serpent was on all women. But no matter who they were or what they wanted, he, Williams, would take them as promised to Dakaru.

It was true that an outlaw's word was all he had left.

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Something made him hate the world and the people in it. Out of my own meager knowledge of him I knew how unfailingly he had been deceived, abused, had treachery come at him, every time he trusted a white man.

I knew what rumor said of his past: how women, and one whom he loved, had used perjury to bring him to the gallows; and how he had been hanged and buried alive (one report had it that a dummy had been buried instead; in quicklime, too) by convict laborers who furtively kept him from being smothered until they could secretly dig him out.

Strangely enough, rumor said that she was dark, black-eyed—beautiful—and vain. A tenfold revenge had smitten her a few years later when a native girl, jealous, hacked her face with a knife; and the pretty strumpet died of bleeding vanity. The background of the life of the man known as Hurricane Williams was tragic; and who could have sanity with such memory-ghosts haunting the brain? Or trust women?

"HAWKINS," I said as we leaned against the galley, "you've made a sighing furnace of many a woman, I know. Tell me, how do you win their confidence?"

Hawkins extended a mandatory hand. Extended it with the careless authority of one exercising an immemorial prerogative. I gave him my pouch. He filled a diminutive cask that he used as a pipe-bowl, and blew a cloud of smoke at the masthead. Sentimental reminiscence overspread his massive face.

"Women; women," he said deeply. Paused. "Ah, women!"

A reflective pause.

"But you can't tell, though. Blue-eyed uns—ah, what liars! Brown-eyed uns—so hurt if you don't b'lieve 'em when you know they're lyin'! Black uns—you can't tell nothin' about 'em any more 'an the others. If only I had a little somethin' to swallow! Talkin' o' women; thirsty work.

"Give me a bouncing, black-eyed lass;
Give me a deep an' steaming glass,
When I'm back from the ocean's roll.
Aye, give me a broad low tavern bench,
An' the soft white arms of a black-eyed wench,
And the devil can have my soul!"

"Mercy," I said. "How cheap our fat *Faustus* holds his soul!"

Hawkins grunted impersonally.

"He's got it anyway. Can't meet a woman an' not give your soul to the devil."

Very meditatively:

"Yes. If she's a saint, deeper his claws get into it. I've met 'em east and west, when I was drunk and when I wished I was. I've had 'em lie an' I've had 'em talk straight, and you can't tell the difference. So when you meet the saint, you think she's like the others."

"The saint?" I said insinuatingly, lifting my brows.

It was something new to find this fleshy bulk sentimental. I had the impression that it would be diverting, though just yet he was a little too earnest to be laughed at. Earnest people may be mocked. But even when they are ponderously fat it is poor sport.

Why shouldn't the distress of women's love hurt a fat man as much as a lean? Is his belly a buckler for his heart, so that while we mock the heavily armored man that's pinked, we cry out over the wounds of the naked gladiator?

"No, friend Burly Ben," I said to myself; "though tears roll down your hilly cheeks I'll be sympathetic—for I enjoy the sad tales of fat men."

"I was young once," said Hawkins. "But al'us had a good sheath of flesh for my soul. I danced a merry jig to a woman's tongue an' bent my back to hones' work. But she wanted to go hellward with a greasy-haired gambler. Told me I was a fool not to know a woman wanted somethin' better 'an a home an' a cradle to jiggle with her foot.

"An' I was never young again.... God, if I only had somethin' to drink!....

"Well sir, I met 'em east an' I met 'em west. Near as I c'd tell, they was all like her. Then one day I met a blue-eyed un. 'Frisco. Said she loved me, an' I said:

"'Course you do. I got a sack o' dollars.'

"'Don't spend 'em,' she said. 'Let's buy a patch o' ground an' raise veg'tables an' get rich.'

"But I called for another bottle. I was drunk for a week, an' she never three feet away. I was too soused to know she stayed sober to keep other people's fingers out o' my pocket.

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"There was a fight. Somebody poked a gun in my hand, an' I killed him.... God, if I could only get somethin' to drink I wouldn't tell all this!...."

I said nothing. I watched him with the fascination of a skeptic beholding the dead rise. He puffed like a man at work. He was throwing something off his conscience. Somehow in the conversation he had stumbled, and was falling headlong into confidence. He couldn't check himself. He went on:

"When I come to, she was in jail with a lie down an' sworn to. Said she done it. They let me see her. —— fools, ought 'o killed me.

"'Why? Why?' I said. She smiled. You know how they smile—just so they've got what they want. She smiled like that. 'Boy, I love you.' Just that."

There were tears dripping down that big, ugly face.

[These men, these men that one meets right and left! Grimy and evil and drunken, gargoyles and satyrs; if only they had skylights in the breasts! But the One who looks down sees anyway perhaps. Perhaps, too, He loves his outcasts best of all.]

"'Boy, I love you.' To me."

He dropped his hands—palms open—in a sort of gesture to show how empty he was of anything worth anybody's love.

"I done my best, but they said I was only tryin' to save her. Save her—why, I thought she was like the others till it was too late. She was always kissin' me an' had 'er fingers in my hair. I thought her just more eager 'an most to fool me.

"Her name was a bad one. I guess they can love like the others. Maybe the firs' un loved her greasy-haired gambler.

"She said: 'Wait for me. I'll be out soon.' I said I would. I meant it. God, I never meant anything like I meant that! But I wandered around, got a long way off, an' other things come up. I'd curse myself all day—if I'd think of it—for not goin' back.

"At last I turned up. She'd been out over a year an' was dead. Somebody'd broke her head with a bottle. A woman, it was. So I couldn't do nothin'. I'd 'a' killed a man—just so—I don't know—so her ghost would've known I wasn't the kind that forgot everything, anyway."

I understood what he meant.

ALL hands were being roused. We were to go about on the starboard tack; and without a word of parting Hawkins and I separated to go to our stations.

As I went toward the poop I glanced up. The sun was going down through a gray mist that belted the horizon, and gloom like a vapor seemed lifting itself from the water. Sunset in wet clouds is a dismal hour.

Above me stood Miss Davenant, looking out to sea—at nothing. Her long black cape was half-blown back and exposed a vivid crimson lining. Tall, braced to the wind, motionless, she was more of a symbolism at that moment than a woman. And the black cape was lined with red. Was that symbolic too?

I went directly past her. She turned slightly and glanced at me as if I had been merely a noise that attracted her notice—as if I simply were not there. There was nothing of the artificiality of pretending to ignore me; her thoughts were elsewhere.

I spoke in passing—

"The sun's making a stupid death-scene tonight, isn't he?"

A little look of surprize—surprize; nothing more—no shade of hostility—leaped into her eyes for a moment. Her smile was slight.

"I like it," she said. And added—

"Oh, immensely."

She turned to westward as she spoke, then glanced again at me.

Before I could speak again, Williams appeared—he had a habit of doing that; not coming, but appearing. He shouted; and I jumped to take hold.

In the course of the next few minutes' work I was too busied to watch her.

A man passed me. I spoke to him as Raikes. He turned. In the twilight I saw that it was not Raikes but a fellow known as Tom Gibson. He had two good eyes, but he wore a blue cotton shirt with a daub of tar near the middle of the back. It was Raikes's shirt and fitted Gibson.

He gave me a hand the same as if he had been Raikes, and went on forward.

"McGuire," said Williams, "take the wheel for the first watch. Raikes'll have the deck. Keep a gun where you can use it—out of sight. Look out for him. I want to pretend to trust him. Wish I could."

He turned away. But I, within his

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cabin, cast a longing look toward the chest.

"Skipper, for the sad confidence of a fat man, I ought to have a nip—or two. Hawkins opened up. I'm not coaxing when I say he shook me a bit.

"He's got another secret too. I'll get that by and by—why he took on with you. He's dropped hints that make me think he knows Dakaru. Too much of a liar to admit it. No, he didn't lie this afternoon about that woman with the blue eyes. Listen."

I repeated Hawkins's story; ending:

"And his words aren't what rammed a hole in my chest. Maybe the girl was drunk when she confessed, and crazily—as women do—stuck to it sober. But it's the year and more after she came out.

"Drinking, you know, with every man off the sea; and asking each if he knew Ben Hawkins. Half-breathless for the answer.

"Looking up at every step. Peering at faces in the alleyways—eager. Trying not to believe that he didn't care. Setting her teeth to faith that he at least had decency to be grateful.

"Drinking to keep up hope. Quarreling because she was having a fight inside herself. Getting sloppier, blearier, and losing that hope. He was like all the others, she said to herself. And sinking into death under the crack of an empty beer-bottle—with a sigh, relief.

"—— it, women like her, and men like him, feel and have pain the same as—the same as—— I don't know much about God, but I'd rather go to Him, drunken, dirty, eaten out with sin, like that woman, than like one that never told a lie to save the man she loved. An' I've got to have a drink!"

As I talked, Williams stood, legs slightly apart, his brows contracted, his eyes glaring in that habitually crazed listening manner of his, and waited the end. He always appeared to resent conversation not pertinent to immediate work, though I doubt if he did.

His attitude, never putting me at ease, was disturbing to strangers. Few—none—understood him. Some—for there is a streak in men that takes up every challenge of manner, no matter from whom—were at once truculent.

Let the biggest man alive put a chip on his shoulder, and it will be impudently knocked off. Williams, not wholly unconsciously, wore a chip. Most people, either cautious or sensible, not necessarily timid, gave him headway.

I ignored his manner; though not his words. Commands were things he meant. He was not a bully. And when he gave his loyalty, his friendship, his word, not the combined admiralties of the world could frighten or fight him out of it.

"Too much imagination," Williams snapped angrily.

I do not think he was angry at me, or at anything. He was characteristically fierce, as some are suave and others brusk. Then, too, I had talked of a woman.

"I'm a mummy inside, skipper."

He said that when he gave me a drink it would mean a ration for every man. I told him for the love of Heaven give it then. That he had a crew of walking dead men, too tired and hopeless even to mutter.

It was largely true. The men did not know Williams, did not know the rewards of keeping faith with him—that is, of having him keep faith with them; and so they were morally beaten, broken; no heart was left in them. The gibbet dangled before their eyes, and not a glint of pirate gold thrilled them for the great chance.

He perhaps did not hear what I said, or hearing gave it not so much as a thought. A wounded man he would nurse on his own knee; but a man dying of overwork—he didn't appear to recognize any such mode of death.

I was given two quarts of gin. I took them to Raulson, and word was passed. Nobody believed it, but all came. I, lying a bit, told Raulson they were from the skipper because he was satisfied with the way the men worked; and, as I intended that he should, Raulson repeated that. It was like a distribution of medals.

Not that it made the men love Williams. Far from it. It livened them up—the nip and praise—to damning him for thinking to buy them cheaply; but they did not mean the damning so much as they had meant the silence.

And I, watching and listening from a little distance apart, turned too late to get a drink for myself. Raulson emptied the second bottle of the half-pint remaining when all had been served—excepting myself. He was humble, and could afford to be, since three times his share was warming his stomach. I cursed to the tune

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that Hawkins was singing interminably in the forecastle:

"Come all you brave sailors an' lis-ten to me.
I'll tell you a yarn o' the *Mary Magee*.
An' how she went down with her whole compan-
ee——"

THERE is nothing that sucks at my bones like loneliness, when I am sober. The marrow goes out of them and I want to crumple like a used rope.

It is a horrible thing for a man to be thrown on himself with nothing to think about but himself. Particularly when it is dark, black, and the boat drives on, moaning and complaining, and the wind is hissing as from clenched teeth.

A small aura of light, not unlike a saint's wreath of beams, spread from the binnacle and gave a little magic shelter to my—not fears, but the something in me that hates the dark. Vague blurs of white splotched the darkness at the points I knew sails were forward. The mizzen leaning out on the larboard was more visible, and something like a great protective wing. I wished it might fold me, hide me, let me sleep indefinitely, and awaken when—But why awaken at all?

The sea bumped and hissed, not ferociously, but displeased. Behind us the water closed fussily in our wake, a sibilant chorus of froth. Too much imagination, as Williams had said.

I felt we were followed by ghosts, bodiless, impalpable, but hissing in a certain weak, futile fury. Among them would certainly be a blue-eyed ghost with an empty beer-bottle—and blood-covered hair.

Davenant, stiff and aloof, seemed to want loneliness. He had taken the air for a few minutes and gone. He was more unbending than ever of late. Nursing, perhaps, his injury from Williams's tongue. It had been reckless, crazy, of him to turn for even only a short time a man like Davenant to work.

Not because there was anything degrading about the work, but because Davenant was Davenant. Davenant was polite in the way of a man who seems a little startled when there is a call for his attention; as when I spoke to him. A casual, "Good evening." A pause; a cool, modulated, distant, but polite, "Good evening" came back.

There was something about him that seemed awkwardness without being any such thing. A kind of angularity perhaps, such as inordinately self-contained people have. Davenant had gone—back to his shadows; he seemed to like them.

The devil has a throne of fire, but it is hid in shadows; perhaps if Davenant sat on that throne in his absence the devil might wander up and down the earth without being missed. Again, too much imagination. Looking straight at Davenant, I could see nothing of the satanic features in him; but his reflection in my memory made me wonder which image it was, his or a childhood trophy of reminiscence about the devil?

Satan was proud too. Some saint once had him by the nose, 'twixt hot tongs. I couldn't remember which one, if I ever knew. Williams would have been such a saint as that.

Somehow there wasn't anything incongruous to me in thinking of Williams as a saint that might have been; some of those old warrior saints must have been crazy, intense, resolute as he. Imagination—too much of it.

Raikes came with the slow step of importance out of the darkness. He came up and stooped over the binnacle. He was talkative. He talked as he looked at the card.

Everything was going fine, he said, or something like it. But if he had the ship he would lay his course a little nearer the middle of the strait. No use hovering in sight of land.

I silently remarked how long his nose was; his unshaven face was covered with a substance that looked more like fur than hair. Splotched, too. The blind eye—I had an impression that it wasn't really blind. He simply didn't need it. Perhaps he could see with it in the dark—just open it and close the other, and catlike look about.

He was mate now, he said. There was a grin like a sneer, too. Was the man drunk? He knew ships and the sea, he did. No, Williams had not *said* he was mate, but given him the work and a berth aft.

Williams—Hurricane Williams— "How did he get such a bluster of fame?" The question wasn't sincere. Raikes seemed to think Williams wasn't entitled to it—to the fear of men.

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"I had a ship once," Raikes began. Liar.

On he went, lying. He laid a dozen men in gore, or maybe only one or two, but spoke of them with that swaggering tone that makes dozens, not individuals, the unit. He would get another ship one of these days—a woman had lost his first for him. Well—on he went.

What was in the air to make men talk of past women this day? Was I turned father confessor to a ship of pirates?

I crooked an arm about a spoke and loosened the holster inside my shirt. Raikes was a little too amiable. Supposing he wanted to step behind me. Mate? It was queer. I was at the wheel to kill the mate if ——

Something had set Raikes dreaming about a ship he never had. Perhaps a lugger, or maybe only a jolly-boat stolen when nobody was looking. He might be drunk. Other things than sweet biting rum will make men drunk. Other things beside women—so I have heard.

He was speaking of the woman. I couldn't remember what he said at first, or how he brought her in. It wasn't the woman that had lost him his ship. It was the one on our ship.

I gave him both ears, but he had nothing to say that was important. The importance was in the way he said it. As if there were intimacy between them. Aye, yes! He knew her secret. Davenant's too.

That *would* make for a feeling of intimacy.

He had never seen a woman like her. Well, few men had.

The wind changed slightly and he hurried forward. I could hear the orders and movement as they slacked away. But I could see nothing. My eyes, from gazing at the binnacle, were accustomed to light, so that when I looked into the darkness I was little better than blinded. My ears seem blinded, too, for the first I knew of her presence was her voice.

"Don't you ever sleep?" she asked with that simulated flattering interest that is the preliminary of an intruding woman. Not that she was intruding.

SHE still wore the long black cape, a sort of robe of invisibility—for night anyway. The night was her element. There seemed a kinship, a sistership, between them. Perhaps my nerves were raveled.

She came close enough to be touched by my aura. Stronger light gave distinctness to the irregularity of her face but dimness softened the outlines—not the expression—of the face. It was not a soft face, but pretty; a certain evil prettiness.

There is nothing more irresistible—to some men. I am one. The ocean's bottom is paved with the bones of others.

There are men who hate women because they can't help loving them—the women. I can help it; nothing like Hawkins's blue-eyed ghost haunts me.

But this isn't of my affairs; so it is more to the point to say Williams could perhaps help loving them, too. But he seemed simply not to see them. That may be the coward's way out, but it is the safest a brave man can take.

Miss Davenant—Raikes had said a quarter of an hour before that her name was Dula. How did he know?— Miss Davenant talked friendly. I could tell that she was not talking about what she wanted. Her lips moved easily and she smiled, but her eyes remained coldly steady. I felt that the veils of those eyes had been pulled aside, that I was looking at the woman—the other woman inside of her. But one might as well look from one sphinx to another.

My tongue must have tripped unsteadily, for though talking is one of the things I do with the greatest ease she made me uncomfortable. If I had not looked at her eyes I wouldn't have minded; though also I was wondering what she really wanted. Why on deck so late to talk to me?

Bluntly it came—

"You would do anything for *him*, wouldn't you?"

Strange, but I knew to whom she referred, though his name had not been mentioned. Strange too, but it seemed the other woman—the other sphinx that lurked behind her eyes—speaking. I had an impression that she spoke through motionless lips, as if it were an actual voice from within. I evaded her face, and fastened mine to the card.

A warning subtlety suffused me. At times I feel myself very clever. Guided a little, too, by her poised fierceness, the fierceness of eyes and voice, I surmised that she had no sympathy with doing anything for Williams.

For one thing, he had humiliated her

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father. I had no reason then for not supposing that Davenant was some one else. For a more important thing, Williams had treated her as if her cloak were one that did actually confer invisibility; and, in my experience, nothing more enrages a woman than being ignored. Too, I had been set to get at her secret, her confidence.

She was not the cold creature of her seeming—of her poised appearance. I had only a few hours before made one slight friendly advance, and here she was back seeking to talk with me, to share a certain familiarity of opinion.

"Do anything for him?" I half-snarled. "Why should I? I never sleep, you say. How can I? Work and blows, —— him!"

If she were surprized she did not show it, or at least I did not see it. I flashed my eyes at her. She was motionless, expressionless, except for a certain hard stare—motionless except for the tugging of the wind at her cloak.

"Look at him," I went on.

"I have."

Her voice was even. It told nothing.

"No more emotion, feeling, in him than in—in a woman who's lost her illusion."

She half-smiled, but not pleasantly.

"Why should *she* have no emotion, no feeling, because she may have lost what was not worth having?"

"He hates women," I said. "All kinds." Just why I said it I don't know, unless I meant to convey further cause for seeming not to like Williams. I perhaps intended to elaborate. But I was disconcerted by the unexpectedness, the savage little tone, of her quick-flung reply.

"And I hate men—all kinds. That's part of the wisdom of having lost illusions. I distinctly hate traitors."

She turned away. The wind swept her cloak from her side, flung back the crimson lining and revealed her hand, and in her hand a knife caught the faint transparency of the binnacle's aura. She half-turned (but did not look again at me) so that the wind brought her cape about her.

It would be hard to say whether her reply or the glimpse of that incomprehensible knife surprized me more; or more than either the fierce energy of her "I distinctly hate traitors." There was no compromise about her. She had told me what she thought of me, and, remembering, I realized that she had come friendlily.

I wish I had not been the subtle fool. After all I might have known subtleties are worthless against women as in this case. They are impenetrable—the women, I mean. It is like using loaded dice, then betting on the numbers, not top or bottom, but on the side. Now I could not possibly convince her that I, too, hated traitors.

Not that it made any great amount of difference what she thought of me—so long as that knife was kept at a distance. I could not imagine what she had it for. For herself? She, being a woman among men of a kind that are not thought to be trusted? She did not appear squeamishly fearful; yet since the cape had never been off her when she was on deck perhaps the knife had never been out of her hand.

I had lost the chance of getting at her secret, the one Raikes inadvertently shared. But I had another. One perhaps she did not intend to have me learn any sooner, if as soon as the one pertaining to Dakaru.

She did not leave the deck, but stood at the starboard rail, the invisible cloak losing her, or all but losing her, to my eyes. I saw her more clearly in my imagination than I would have done had she been close. I saw her symbolically, and symbolism is more vivid than the thing it stands for.

That is, to my mind there she stood, resolute, brooding, her pale, irregular face framed by black hair, calm, cold to appearance, but fierce at heart; enveloped by black cloth, lined with red; and in her hand a knife. Not a woman so much as something tenuously palpable and, to repeat, symbolic of all women of all time; disillusioned, and the more impenetrable for it.

It was a chill night and my bones ached with something other than cold.

THE next hour passed, I know not how. It stretched itself along into time. I don't know when she had left the deck.

Raikes had come back, singing to himself, or rather humming. He did not talk with me. He walked to and fro, but did not meet her. She was not there. I wondered what was the matter with him.

Once he made as if to come behind me, but I, alert, cried, "What is that?" and pointed. There was nothing. I knew it. But I nearly frightened myself. Raikes,

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catching the alarm in my voice, turned, hurried to investigate, peered, asked what I saw.

"I could have sworn there was somebody there," I said. "And something glinted." I had to add that.

He stood looking for some time, not concerned, merely idle. He had had no real purpose in getting behind me; and I had been cowardly for nothing. Presently there was more pulling and hauling, and the men came aft, silent of voice, shuffling about—perhaps sleepily, but to me it seemed something more; lifelessly.

The watch changed. I gave over the helm. Williams was on deck. I knew that I couldn't sleep, so I stayed about, waiting for I knew not what.

Williams paced back and forth, lightly striding. At last he noticed me in the shadow of the companion. A hand gripped my shoulder and whirled me about. His face came peeringly close to mine.

"Oh, you."

He had thought it might be some one else. It perhaps would not have been well with any one else to have been lurking there.

"No sleep tonight. I've got 'em again. Whither away? Ten, twenty, thirty, fifty years at most, to be alive and then perhaps be dead. How does it go? Perchance to dream.

"Tell me what you are afraid of, skipper. I'll conjure it up. You'll know how I feel then. I'm shivered."

He had no sympathy with my recurrent weakness when the devil, or as in this case the devil's daughter—for such she was—bowled me into the dumps.

"I tell you I believe in vampires," I insisted.

I didn't, of course; but I had to say so to add:

"One has been at my veins all night. And the sphinx said she hated me."

He remarked truly, raspingly, that I talked nonsense.

"No. Riddles. As one should who has heard the sphinx. Listen. I have her secret. Dakaru is nothing, a trifle that may fall to any fellow's ears, as to Raikes's. But this: She loves you."

I don't know what Williams said. It wasn't a word; it was an exasperated, inarticulate, clipped comment. And he followed it up with a ferocious order, meant kindly, to get below.

I say meant kindly; but perhaps not. The three words had hit him in his Achilles' heel — the vulnerable spot. Love of women was to him as the flaming shirt some hero of old time put on unsuspectingly from the hands of a woman—who loved him.

And I had told the truth. It doesn't pay. I had told her the other thing. That did not pay either. Nothing remained but silence—and I had to talk.

I went below. I went to his cabin, and in the dim light of the lantern swung from a rafter inspected the chest. It was locked.

I looked about for something to pry with. I went out, slipped forward for a marlinspike. I would be drunk by morning, or——

By the main hatch I stumbled. My foot had struck something soft, heavy but with that plastic inertia that means a body, a human body.

I swore, chilled, surprized — aye, frightened.

My oaths had scarcely cleared my tongue before Williams shouted from above. He was like that. I mean his response to every situation was so instantaneous as to be automatic. "Good God!" I had cried, and readily, as if watching, he demanded who and what?'

"A dead man!" I shouted up, convinced though really ignorant; but not ignorant if something beyond mere sense of sight and touch is admitted. There had been murder in the air. I had felt it all evening, as some of those strange wizards of wild islanders could *feel* the coming of storms.

It was a dead man; Tom Gibson. An inoffensive, slight-built fellow; the last mark one would have guessed for the slim knife that reached his heart and stayed there. He had no quarrel with anybody; at least none that was known. He was not the man to have a quarrel.

The men came with an air, less of excitement than of curiosity. Word passed quickly. Sleepers roused themselves out of the forecastle to look at the dead man and wonder.

A jargon of muttering, surmises, amazement, came from the circled group that closed around the two lanterns held over his body, while Williams with knees to deck bent searchingly over the corpse.

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I BROKE into the chest before those on deck had lifted the body. I drove the cork into the bottle as the easiest way to get the liquor out.

No one will believe it, but I might as well tell the truth. I drank a quart of gin more rapidly than I could have taken so much water; and in a few minutes it was a different ship, a different sea, a different world. A warm world—plenty of warmth in it.

Quickly I slipped the staple back into the chest, moistened my fingers and rubbed —to give age—the marks of the prying it out. And, as often happens in the best laid plans of mice and other thieves, I forgot the empty bottle as I hurried out.

There was a light under the door-crack of the room Miss Davenant used. Unthinkingly, carelessly, I knocked. I knocked again. Had I been then in reach of the Pearly Gate I would have as impudently battered at it and plucked St. Peter's whiskers had he frowned.

The door opened slightly; and she, recognizing me, pushed the door wide. She stood there expectantly, black cape and all. But there was no knife in her hand. I knew it, though I could not see her hand.

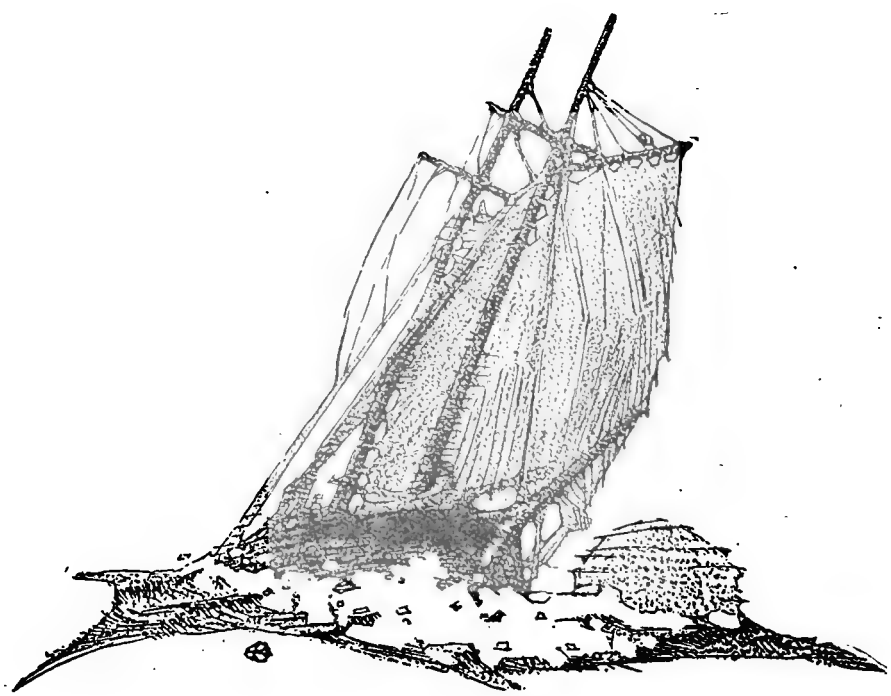
I bowed low and said:

"You made a triflin' mistake this evening. It was not I you tripped hellward. I just thought I'd let you know, so you wouldn't scream in the morning light—takin' me for a ghost. Good night."

I bowed again.

Looking up, I saw two gleaming eyes and nothing more. I heard, "Come in here," and nothing more. Had I been sober I wouldn't have gone. Had I been sober I would never have knocked.

TO BE CONTINUED



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Queen Of The Hills

By Robert J. Horton

Author of "Gulch of the Lonesome Winds" and "Checkers at Hungry Horse."

"SANDY" slapped his horse smartly behind the ear.

"C'mon, c'mon, you lop-sided, lob-eared, club-footed second cousin of a crippled snail! We got to make Parker by noon! Gettin' so a feller's got to get up before daylight to get a early enough start to get away anywhere with you—you supernumerated, obliquadated piece of imitation horse-flesh!"

A sure sign that Sandy was in good spirits.

The horse he rode wiggled his ears appreciatively. He had been listening to that kind of talk from Sandy for ten years and he discounted it accordingly by increasing his walking pace for some ten yards and then falling back into his steady, all-day, up-or-down gait.

Sandy slung his left leg about the saddle-horn, whistled to the pack-horse in the rear so that animal might know he was still within the compass of Sandy's authority, and then broke into song:

"Lead ore going up,
Shafts are going down;
Soon there'll be money enough
To go all aroun'."

It was original, and for that reason as well as for the smile in his heart he repeated it several times.

Sandy was on the last lap of his journey from the copper country around Butte to the abandoned silver and lead districts of the Little Belt Mountains. Prices of galena ore were climbing fast, and soon the old mines and claims that had been forsaken years before when the bottom dropped out of silver would again be valuable and it would not be hard to sell or to obtain capital with which to work them.

A promising prospect in the galena district surrounding what once had been the mining town of Parker would very shortly be worth good money. This was enough to attract Sandy.

It didn't take much of an incentive to send him trekking along the dim mountain-trails to fresh fields and his trails had crossed and crisscrossed during the twenty years that he had prospected the high hills of Montana until he knew the country better than the Forest Service men—which is saying a great deal.

It was Spring. The mountain meadows were splashed with flowers and the breath of the pines was sweet.

The sun was almost directly overhead when Sandy urged his horse around a turn in the trail with a fresh outburst of invectives and pulled up suddenly with an exclamation of genuine astonishment.

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Before him lay the clustered cabins and weather-stained fronts of erstwhile stores and refreshment palaces that once had been dignified by representation on the State maps as the mining town of Parker.

The cabins must have looked much the same as they were in the days when the camp hummed with industry and the narrow gage was run from Kingsville. The white-chinked sides and dirt roofs were intact; but doors and windows were vacant and gaping and stared out upon the grass-grown streets like so many sightless eyes. Crumbling, rotting planking before dilapidated store-buildings testified to long disuse.

All this was as Sandy had expected.

His surprize was occasioned by sight of several horses tied before a well-preserved building in the foreground. From this building there issued sounds of unmistakable merriment such as might be expected when convivial persons of the high hills gathered.

Now Sandy had not exactly expected to be the first to return to this country in anticipation of renewed activity as a result of the stimulus received by silver and lead prices, although he had got an early start.

But he had looked forward to finding on the ground only a few seasoned prospectors like himself. Instead—if he was not mistaken—here was the genuine article in the way of embryo mining-camp saloons, open and ready for business.

HE TURNED from the trail at a point just above the building and made camp near a clump of small firs in the rear. He unslung his packs, covered them with a piece of tarpaulin, unsaddled and hobbled his two horses.

Then he proceeded toward the scene of festivity.

He entered a long room with an improvised rough-board bar and quarter-size mirror on one side, a few battered tables and chairs on the other, a small barrel heating stove in the rear, and the time-honored lithograph, "Custer's Last Stand," on the wall.

He was greeted noisily.

"Welcome to our booming young camp, stranger," roared a large, red-faced man who formed the center of a small group before the bar.

"Just get in?" queried another.

Sandy answered all salutations with a smile and a nod of his head.

"Have a snort," invited the big man in the same blustering, violent voice. "Old Al Hocks has just opened this place to git ready fer the rush back to the old camp and he's startin' right by shoving out some regular licker."

Sandy accepted amiably.

"Where d'you hail from, stranger?" demanded the noisy one.

"Over Butte way," replied Sandy quietly.

"Prospecting?"

"The same."

"Locating?"

"Maybe."

"Wal, you just happened along at the right time, friend; you're in on the ground floor of what's goin' to be the livest silver-lead camp in Montany. We just got here, too, though some of us been here before.

"Brought old Al and his stock right with us and we're goin' to relocate the choicest claims and abandoned diggings hereabouts by night; eh, boys? The Queen of the Hills fer mine, boys; drink to the Queen of the Hills!"

They raised their glasses and downed the whisky.

"I'm last here, so I expect I'm nominated for the next one," observed Sandy as he pulled out a tobacco-sack, untied its strings and laid a gold certificate on the bar.

"That's the kettle," roared the large man. "Needn't be afraid to open up here; you're with the right people and you're right in on the ground floor, or underground floor. How's that boys; underground floor, eh?"

They raised their glasses in Sandy's honor.

"Boys, this is just like the good old days," said the loud-mouthed man, wiping his mustaches with a red bandanna and glancing importantly at his heavy gold watch.

"Just like the good old days—same spirit, same kind of crowd. Some of you was here before, includin' me, an' you, Al, and Tommy there, and Joe Mack here—and the same old green and yaller hills just plumb full o' lead and silver waitin' fer us to make the big clean-up! Same old licker, too; how about it, Al?"

"This'll be on the house," grinned the man behind the bar, taking the hint thus subtly conveyed.

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"Just like the good old days," continued the obstreperous one, gulping his drink with flourish and gusto while Sandy watched him in the mirror.

"'Member the times we used to have round here when she was boomin', Al? When that danged little hand-me-down brewery was running up here? And twenty-six saloons! Gents, this here camp oncet had more saloons fer its size than any dog-goned camp in the world or Montana! It had, didn't it, Tommy?"

Tommy nodded in the affirmative—a nod seemed all that was required.

"'Member old Professor Mort?" queried the big man, turning to Sandy. "But I guess you wasn't here, fer I don't 'member any man with a beard as red as yourn. Wal, he rambled round the hills studying strata and geology or suthin' instead of locating on the promising claims that he found. Queer duck. You 'member him, don't you, Joe Mack?"

Joe Mack remembered him—and something else. He laid the something else on the bar and glasses clinked again.

"Those was the days," ruminated the principal speaker in a stertorous voice. "'Member the old funnygraf? Parker had the first funnygraf that ever came into these here hills. Hull camp chipped in fer it and it cost three hundred dollars with twelve records and a blank—express extra!"

"That danged old talkin'-machine saved my life once," Al Hocks volunteered. "Feller from 'way down Belt Creeks swore I'd short-changed him one night, and after making every other saloon in town he came back after me without me knowing it and consequently bein' unprepared. It was my turn to have the machine—we all took turns at it—and when he come in with his shootin'-iron unlimbered for business somebody was playin' 'Silver Threads among the Gold.' That was our sentymental tune—we had one of each kind: sentymental, patrootic, juvenile, ragtime, so on.

"That guy listened a minute, took off his hat, laid his gun on the bar, and 'stead o' killin' me he bought for the house. I wonder whatever become of that machine?"

"I don't know what become of it, but it got Nora O'Hara at the White Fawn restraw married," put in Tommy. "She wuz tryin' to get Henry Holleran to propose, but Henry was bashful and lacked the nerve. So one night she borryed the funnygraf, got him in the dining-room alone with her and played 'Home Sweet Home' until—Well, they're living up in Neihart now an' got the hull gulch plugged up with little Hollerans!"

Tommy paid for his own story by ordering more refreshment.

"IF IT hadn't been for that thing I'd been in a bad fix once," said Joe Mack, silver-haired and usually silent.

"Yes?" prompted Sandy.

"I got lost coming down from a claim above Gold Run. Stingin' snow ridin' on a forty-mile wind near blinded me. Heard the thing playin' and just steered for the tune and landed at the Hot Dog caffy."

"Ever hear what become of the machine?" asked Al.

Joe Mack shook his head.

"Wal, now I'll tell you what *I* know 'bout it," roared the large, red-faced man, who had maintained an amused silence. "I guess I was about the las' man to see it in this here camp.

"There was a fresh sort of feller up here what had the Queen of the Hills claim at first. One night he took exception to suthin' I said when I was kiddin' him and pulled a gun on me. He 'peared to be kind of handy with a gun, so I let him get away with it.

"But I got even with him in a way he couldn't twist aroun' into a gun-play. I grabbed his girl—I see that you 'member, Al. Yes, I grabbed his girl—Alice, her name was; and she was dark and pretty, an' worked at the Miners' Hotel. She was a good singer and had a song called 'The Prairie Rose' that we all liked.

"The three of us—this feller, me and Alice—was up in the hotel parlor one night playin' the funnygraf when this feller up and asks Alice to choose between the two of us. She looked at me and kept still; but he saw which way the wind was blowin' and kept still too.

"But a little later he got out that blank record that everybody had forgotten and got her to sing 'The Prairie Rose' into it, which she did, and say—it made the best record in the bunch.

"Wal—" the big man spilled a handful of change on the bar—"the next morning the 'Prairie Rose' record, the funnygraf, and

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that feller was all gone—just dropped out of sight and never came back."

Sandy yawned as the drinks were served.

"What became of the woman?" he asked dryly.

"I married her quick," grinned the big man. "As I say, the feller had the Queen of the Hills claims, and he left a note tellin' her she could have the claim. I relocated it right away, you bet. And then the bottom dropped out o' silver and we went down to Great Falls.

"But she would hardly do for me in town, so after a couple years I let her get a divorce. She's got a boy now—our boy—seventeen—to take care of her.

"An' what d'you think—" he slammed a huge fist on the bar—"I heerd yesterday that she was goin' to send that boy of hern up here to relocate the Queen of the Hills. Yes, sir; goin' to try to beat me to it.

"But I'm on the job and I'll have my paper tacked up there before sundown. This is goin' to be some camp now, boys—bigger'n ever—and we're all in on the underground floor, eh?"

"Well, gents, I've got to rustle a bite to eat," said Sandy. "Last in, last to buy—have another."

"You got here just in time," thundered the big man. "This here's goin' to be some camp."

"Glad of it," answered Sandy. "I'm sick of copper; it's too well hid; you got to follow a lead to China before you know what you've got."

SANDY made his way out of the rear door to his camp on the slope of the hill above. His horses were grazing near by. He built a small fire with branches pulled from a standing dead pine.

From a pack-sack he took frying-pan, coffee-pot, bacon, coffee, a cold trout and some cold biscuits. He fried the bacon to a light crisp, heated the fish in the hot grease, made coffee on some coals he raked to one side. He finished off his meal with stewed apricots, which he ate from a glass jar.

After he had eaten he returned the rest of the bacon-strip, jar and utensils to the pack-sack and replaced the tarpaulin. Then he lit his pipe and smoked peacefully.

Suddenly he rose, made his way across the shoulder of the hill and climbed the slope within the shelter of the jack-pines until he reached a point opposite an open space where a big yellow dump and remnants of a hoist and structure marked the location of a shaft which once had been worked.

He waited in the shadow of the green timber.

At the lower end of the open space appeared the red-faced man who had monopolized the conversation in the saloon. He had some papers in his hand. The red-faced man walked rapidly to a location-notice post near the platform at the top of the shaft.

From a pocket he drew hammer and tacks. He tore the faded and worn notice which had resisted wind and weather for years from the board affixed high on the post. Then he placed one of his papers on the board and held a tack in place.

As he did so Sandy stepped out from his place of concealment under the scrub-pines.

"Wait a minute!" he called sharply.

The big man turned, surprized and angry, dropping the hammer and tack, but holding the paper against the board with his left hand.

"What the ——"

"Don't swear," cautioned Sandy. "I actually have got so I just hate profanity—and you might take that paper off there because it will get tiresome holding it."

"What do you want? I was here first and I——"

"Maybe you was an' maybe you wasn't; I've been over there under those trees for a spell—started for here by a short-cut when I saw you leave the saloon."

"But I've got my notice up right now, even if I'm holdin' it; the law'll stick behind me."

"Yes, but you're going to take it down in a minute or less," said Sandy amiably.

"I'll hold it here till —— freezes over before I'll let you beat me to this Queen of the Hills claim!" roared the big man, making a move with his right hand.

"Drop it!"

The words cracked like a whip-lash, and no eye could have followed Sandy's move which placed a gun in his hand, leveled from the hip.

The paper fluttered to the ground following the thud of the big man's pistol as he elevated his hands above his head.

"That's better—much better," said Sandy lightly. "Now let's sit down—easy—that's right. We want to look at this

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matter from a calm, unprejudiced standpoint; I'm not going to put up my gun because I like to see disputes settled amiably and peaceably. You said this was the Queen of the Hills claim?"

"You can't jump it—I've located it," snarled the other. "I can get witnesses to prove it."

"I wasn't figuring on jumping it," said Sandy. "I merely aim to see the square thing done. How much did you say you gave that woman you married when you left her down in the Falls?"

"None of your —— business."

"How much?" repeated Sandy, leaning toward the other and looking him square in the eyes.

The big man paled and stammered—

"Why—nothing."

"Well, now, that ain't exactly right, is it?" queried Sandy earnestly, holding the other's gaze. "That boy must have been pretty young when you dug out—just a baby, wasn't he? I thought so.

"An' you left her cold, handicapped like that; and now after she's had to shift for herself and the kid all these years you sneak back up here to relocate the claim that you grabbed after it was left to her and in which she is entitled to an interest—a hundred per cent. interest. Honestly, I'm ashamed of you."

"What—what——"

"What is it to me? Well I'll tell you. I like to see justice done, and somehow this deal don't show the right color. Looks to me like the woman you did so much dirt to was the only flake of gold in the pan of misdeeds you been shaking since this old camp died."

"But what do you want of me?"

"Of you? Oh, nothing. I was just wondering if I ought to kill you."

Sandy spoke slowly with a suggestion of drawl; but he did not for an instant withdraw his eyes from the other's although the big man shifted his gaze continually.

"You see, I never killed a man because none of 'em thought they was quick enough on the draw to take a chance with me; and as for killin' one cold—well, I never had such a good excuse before. It's something of a problem; I'll have to think it over a bit."

Sandy seemed to ponder.

The big man moistened his dry lips as he stared incredulously at Sandy.

A sound of hoof-beats came from the lower end of the slope.

Sandy sprang to his feet, kicking the gun on the ground well out of reach.

"Sit still and keep your hands up," he commanded sharply as he looked swiftly over his shoulder.

A youth was riding up the slope.

"What looking for, sonny?" called Sandy.

"Is this the Queen of the Hills claim?"

"The same. This is it—why was you asking?"

"I've got some notices to post although the men down to the saloon told me I was too late," answered the youth as he pulled up his horse, eying them wonderingly.

"No, you're not late," said Sandy. "You're just in time. Put your first notice on that center post there."

With a questioning look the boy dismounted and did as instructed.

"Now you'll find your first corner-post down there to the left by the road," directed Sandy, pointing. "The second is across the road up by that outcropping of granite; the third is up on the west side of the slope in them jack-pines, and the other is over to the west by that tall fir stump that's been struck by lightnin'.

"Get your notices up and drop into my camp behind the saloon when you come down. Me and my friend here'll be going now."

Sandy motioned for the big man to rise and precede him down the trail.

"Doesn't even know you, does he?" sneered Sandy. "Never even went to see your own son, eh? I wish you'd make some kind of a break because, as I said before, I never really had a good excuse to kill a man before."

They halted in front of the saloon.

"Got a horse here?" asked Sandy.

"Over there," answered the big man sullenly.

"Get him."

Several forms appeared in the saloon doorway.

Sandy moved a little below the road, covering the man who was mounting and the men in the doorway.

"Our friend is leaving us," he explained. "If any of you gents want to go along or have anything to say to him before he goes now's your chance."

There was no reply.

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"Otherwise you might go back to whatever business you had before we happened along."

Sandy turned to the man on the horse; his eyes glinted with a sinister fire.

"I'll be camping right here at the head of the trail any time you want to come back," he said evenly, "and I'll meet you with hot lead. There's just one reason I'm not killing you, and I'll leave you to guess what it is. But if I was in your shoes I'd never stop until I came to the Missouri River and I'd hang out hereafter on the other side. Get out!"

There was a clatter of horse's hoofs.

THE sunset fires were dying behind the lofty ridges in the west. The roofs and sides of the cabins in the town now awakening to new life were splotched with color. A freshened wind, harbinger of the long twilight of the high hills, sang in the timber that clothed the sides of the narrow valley wherein the Dry Fork nursed its scanty waters.

Joe Mack idled in the rear door of the thirst-parlor which had preceded the rush to the reviving mining camp.

He was watching Sandy about the little camp-fire on the slope above.

Sandy was removing something from a pack-sack. He was exercising great care. He placed an object resembling a small box on a rock in the shadows and bent over it.

"Al, Tommy—come here quick!" called Joe Mack.

"What is it?" asked the pair as they joined him.

"Listen!"

Above the plaint of the wind in the pines could be heard the faint but unmistakable strains of a phonograph—a woman's voice reproduced by a carefully preserved record.

The air seemed familiar.

"'The Prairie Rose'!" breathed Tommy softly.

The last notes of the song wavered and died.

"You say there's a woman coming up tomorrow?" asked Al Hocks of a newcomer just arrived.

"Yep—saw her down at Kingsville with a wagon-load of furniture, and she said she'd sent her boy up ahead to relocate a claim."

"If it hadn't been for the beard he's growed I'd have knowed him," said Al. "I wonder now if—after all these years—Jimminy crickets! What'll you locoed muckers have?"

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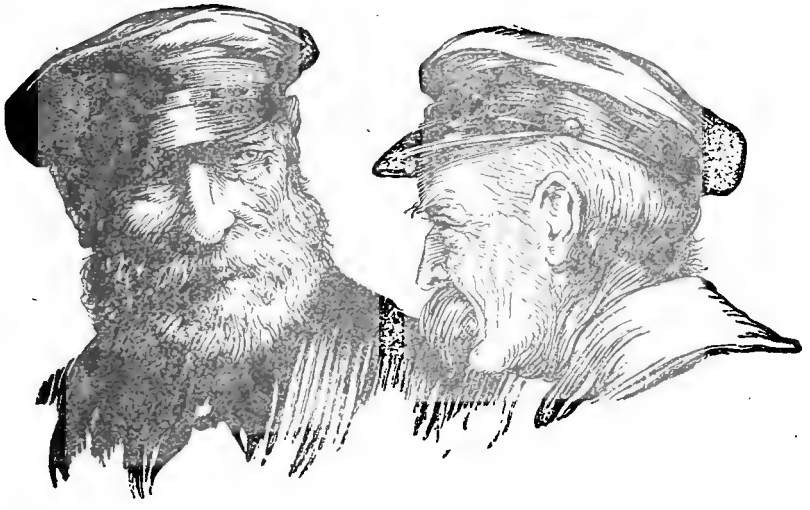
The Out-Of-Dates

By Frank H. Shaw



"IT WAS hearing about the *Begonia* that reminded me of it," began Captain Mornington.

You'll remember that case well enough—a bit of real sea-heroism. I couldn't help thinking that such a fight against long odds would have been meat and drink to old Captain Brookes of the *Bermuda*. Some of you might have known him.

A sailing-ship man he was; he hadn't any faith in steam. He belonged to a previous generation, but he was a sterling seaman. It was he who rescued the crew of the *Loyalist* when she got smashed up in the big gale of 1877; he was a youngish man then, in his prime.

The papers said there hadn't been such a rescue in the history of the sea; he swam with a line, you might remember. But I'm not going to tell you about that.

He got his first command in the Colonial Line when barely twenty-four; he was young and hot-headed then, opinionated, and he didn't get on well with his officers perhaps; but he grew out of that.

It was during this first voyage in command that he picked up old Tom Hayes, whom some of you might have heard of. Tom was a youngster then, mighty little better than a boy; foolish enough, too easily led. But he had decent instincts. He'd been paid off from a ship after a three years' voyage, and with all his money in his pocket he went ashore in Shanghai.

Now, Tom always says that it was his firm intention to go straight to the consul's office and send every last cent of that money home to his mother, who was dependent on him for the means of existence; and he always stuck to his point, too. So it is to be presumed that he did mean to send it home.

But he met with one or two shipmates who hadn't mothers at home or if they had, had forgotten all about them; and he drifted from one place to another, drinking, and drinking hard. Finally he was picked up by a couple of dead-beats who conducted him to a particularly low saloon that's since been done away with. I'm telling you all this because it has a bearing on the story, though it may seem tedious to you.

Captain Brookes was taking a walk ashore about that time, and it so chanced that his way led him past this saloon, which was tucked away in a street of no repute whatsoever. Logically the skipper had no right to be there, but there he was.

And as he walked past—it was his first

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visit to the port; he was curious—the door of this saloon opened, and he heard an English voice singing a familiar song. It didn't need more than two eyes to see the style of place it was; a crimp's den, filthy, horrible; a regular sailors' trap; and there were one or two men hanging about outside who looked as if they'd no right to be anywhere but in jail.

Old Brookes, who was young Brookes then, thought it wasn't right to hear an English voice coming from inside such a den, and he started in to inquire. The loafers about the door wanted to stop him; but he understood how to handle himself, and he soon brought them to order.

When he opened the door and stepped inside the first thing he saw was Tom Hayes, half-drunk, red-faced, dishevcled, with two born robbers sitting beside him, encouraging him to drink more and more. Tom was a good-looking youngster in those days, I believe, and it might have been that that aroused Brookes's temper. Anyhow he walked up to the lad and laid his hand on his arm; and in his quarter-deck voice he said:

"Come out of this, my man; do you hear? Come out of this!"

Tom looked up at him gropingly and hiccoughed a bit.

"You're not my skipper," he coughed. "I'll do as I blame' well please. I'm paid off with three years' pay-day, an' I'm going to enjoy myself. Going to send my money home to my mother in a bit."

"You leave him alone," said one of the two blackguards with him. "It's none of your business."

And they looked mighty ugly, so I heard.

"It's very much my business," said Brookes quietly; he was always quietest when most dangerous. "I'm going to take that fellow out of here, and I shouldn't like to be the man who interferes."

Well, the blackguards showed fight; one of them pulled out a sand-bag and was for downing Brookes there and then; but the skipper had a heavy half-arm punch with his left and the sand-bagger went down amongst the spittoons in a jiffy. The other man got up with a chair and nearly broke Brookes's shoulder, but the skipper landed him; and then the whole place went mad.

It was a very pretty scrap, from what one heard; one man against about a dozen of the nastiest scoundrels you'd come across in half a dozen ports; but Brookes fought hard and steadily, using a chair he picked up. I think that saloon must have looked like a house-boat in a Biscay gale by the time he'd finished. The proprietor was lying amongst his broken bottles, and one or two others were badly chewed up. Brookes, too, had taken punishment; but he was triumphant.

He didn't even stop behind to argue as to the rights or wrongs of the case. He just yanked Hayes to his feet and threw the real quarter-deck rasp into his voice.

"What about your money?" he asked.

Hayes fumbled about and found it was gone, every note of it. Brookes got busy; he searched the two crimps and found a considerable bundle of notes on one of them, and Tom Hayes was sober enough to recognize it as his own.

"Now, you're coming with me," said Brookes. "You're not able to take care of yourself; but I'm hanged if I'm going to see a white man made into a hog against his will, and not do something."

So he piloted Hayes away from the saloon, defying the riffraff to interfere, and brought him in safety to the consul's. Here he locked Hayes up until he was sober enough to know what he was doing, and then extracted from him his mother's address; went to the consul and sent the whole lot home.

He didn't say anything to Hayes about what he'd done; he just let him believe he'd lost his money for a little while; but when the *Bermuda* was ready for sea two days later, he had Tom brought down aboard and signed him on as A. B.

"You look over there," he said when Tom had written his name on the articles, pointing to a notoriously hard-case packet that was just leaving port. "If I hadn't happened along when I did you'd have been outward-bound aboard that hooker, and her mate is a man-killer, as every one knows."

Tom didn't appear very grateful; he seemed to incline to the opinion that Brookes was taking a lot for granted; and besides he was thoroughly ashamed of himself for losing his money.

"Can I send a month's advance home to my mother?" he asked very sheepishly.

"Your mother's all right; I sent her all your three years' pay-day," answered

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Brookes. "I'm going to keep my eye on you, my son; you don't seem fit to be trusted with money."

They do say that Hayes almost fell down on the deck and licked the skipper's boots when he heard that bit of news. And when the *Bermuda* got home and Tom Hayes went ashore to find that his pay-day had reached his mother just as she was on the very verge of starvation, and ill too, he swore an oath, he told me, that he'd make it right with Brookes some time or other. One thing, he started teetotal after that, except of course in extreme cases; but ashore he never touched liquor again.

He signed on aboard the *Bermuda* when she left port; if Brookes had wanted to he couldn't have got rid of him; and being a white man, a good sailor, and honest enough, Hayes was a good influence to have aboard. He was promoted after a while to boatswain; and I daresay he'd have gone further but that he could never handle figures worth a cent.

HE STUCK as boatswain with Brookes for more years than one cares to think about; he moved from ship to ship with him; there was never any question of another boatswain all the time. It was Hayes who kicked the men into activity when the crew of the *Loyalist* were saved; he and Brookes together did the trick.

But they both began to grow old; two white-haired, red-faced men, clear-eyed, courageous, sea-fighters to the core. They went through something together, let me tell you, what with half-mutinous crews and bad weather; but when things were at their worst Brookes could always count on Hayes to back him up. It was a doglike devotion on the sailor's part; he did it instinctively. He used to curse the skipper roundly when he was out of hearing; but that was only his way.

And one night—off the pitch of the Horn it was, when the wind was blowing great guns, when the sleet froze solid on deck and shrouds as it fell, when the sea was out to kill and there was a sea-mist that kept every man's eyes thoroughly skinned for possible disaster—Hayes established a certain custom. Brookes was wet through, weary, chilled to the marrow, and heart-sick with a constant hopeless watching for fine weather.

He couldn't leave the deck, because the mate had turned a bit panicky; he was a young man and not long mate; but he—Brookes, I mean—felt that he had just about reached the end of his tether.

"This'll buck ye up a bit, sir," said a voice in his ear quite suddenly; and as he turned a tin pannikin full of rum and boiling water was thrust into his hand—by Hayes.

That was just the spur Brookes needed. He was a temperance man all his life; but there are moments when even the most rabid teetotaler needs a little stimulant; and Hayes had found the exact moment.

How he'd got the stuff Brookes didn't trouble to ask; perhaps he thought the boatswain had stolen it from the steward; but as a fact he hadn't. Hayes had saved up the occasional tot of grog that was served out until he had accumulated quite a stock; and he had taken the key of the galley from under the cook's pillow when he was asleep.

Understand me, it wasn't just the grog that warmed Brookes's frozen heart; it was the little act of thoughtfulness, the realization that some one understood his feelings and knew the strain he labored under. I can imagine that his voice would be a bit gruff as he handed the empty pannikin back and said—

"Thanks, bosun, thankee."

It was a little thing enough, but no one else had thought of it—no one. Hayes didn't take any credit for performing a kindly action; he had just obeyed an instinct—that rare instinct that, given vent to, creates lifelong friendships.

Brookes told me that he turned to the fight with a new courage, ready to do and dare anything. I don't say that the ship was saved by that pannikin of grog; that would be too big an assertion to make; but it certainly helped Brookes considerably; put new heart into him; made the overwhelming difficulties become by comparison trivial. Such a statement wouldn't arouse sympathy amongst a gathering of temperance people; but—I tell the thing as it happened.

After that it became not exactly a regular occurrence, but an occasional one, for Hayes to take a pannikin full of steaming grog to the skipper on wild nights, just at the critical moment. He seemed to know when Brookes's endurance was failing; if there'd

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been a long spell of fog, or if there'd been a week of bad weather, say, just as the skipper felt as if he'd give his immortal soul for the right to throw up his hands and relinquish the battling—you men know that feeling!—up would come Hayes with the grog; the sort of moral kick behind, that helped so very much; and fresh courage was born—bred of the kindliness. No need to labor the point; but I believe you understand what I mean.

Things went on this way for year after year, both men growing old together. Brookes married; so did Hayes; but their wives died in the course of time. The skipper was left childless.

And the Colonial Line sold their ships one by one, because steam was ousting sail surely. I said Brookes had no use for steam; he always said it wasn't seafaring at all but just plain engine-driving.

"Might as well stand on a foot-plate as on a bridge," were his words, "for all the skill that's required. A sailing-ship man I am, and a sailing-ship man I'll stop to the end of things."

And so said Hayes. The latter had a family of daughters by this time, and I don't think he had much money to spare; certainly he wasn't the saving kind.

The last ship—sailing-vessel—the Colonial Line retained was the *Good Hope;* and Brookes commanded her, refusing better berths steadily. Younger men than he took the steamers and rose to the bigger ones; the owners offered the old man all the fat berths, but he invariably shook his head and said that so long as they owned a wind-jammer he asked nothing better than to command her, in that he had no use for steamers.

I daresay his wife during her lifetime gave him a bad time about it all, but in many ways he was stubborn—as he showed when he fetched Hayes out of that dive in Shanghai. So he stuck aboard the *Good Hope*, whilst younger men took the steamers; and every time the old tub cleared from port Hayes was first of the foremast hands to answer the roll-call. It got to be a byword in the Line, as it was a byword wherever the *Good Hope* went, that if you saw Brookes anywhere, you'd see Hayes not a fathom away.

It's really rather surprizing that the skipper stuck it out. You all know how the wind-jammer trade degenerated; from the China tea-trade to the Australian wool-trade, then to tramping here, there and anywhere, picking up cargoes wherever they could be found.

The *Good Hope* had once filled her holds with fragrant spices and costly silks; but now she was glad to get a coal-cargo outward to Frisco and load up there with grain, filling herself full. And later still she would wander down to the West Coast and load up with nitrates, racking cargoes that strain a ship in every plate.

And as her cargoes depreciated, so did her crews. She gradually lost her white men. The old-timers who asked nothing better of God or man than the right to fight the sea in all its humors died or went into steamers; growing old, they sought greater comfort than the old *Good Hope* and ships of her class afforded.

You can imagine the two old cronies shaking their heads over the state of affairs. The usual ration of grog was cut out too; profits had diminished, and in self-defense the owners had to adopt a cheese-paring policy.

No more of the boatswain stumbling aft with his steaming pannikin of grog when the nights were bleak and cold; he had other things to do with his time, for they had cut the number of the crew down along with other economies, and he had to work twice as hard as any of the forecastle hands.

So there came a day when the Colonial Line decided the *Good Hope* was obsolete; she had failed to pass her survey; she was racked and strained everywhere. They had an offer for her from a Norwegian firm, and when the old craft reached port they sent for Brookes to their office and communicated the news to him.

"Going to sell the *Hope?*" said Brookes, as if unable to believe the evidence of his senses. "The old *Hope?*"

The senior partner, the man who had watched the transit from sail to steam, nodded gravely. Perhaps he understood the skipper's feelings; perhaps he knew that they had kept on the *Hope* simply because Brookes had been a good servant to them.

"Yes," he said; "she has to go at last, captain. But there's the *Trinidad* almost ready for sea; she'll be ready to take in cargo in another month or so; and she's yours. Take my advice; accept things

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as they are. Sailing-ships are done with; they're out of date."

"Same as I am, eh?" said Brookes. "It's kind of you to make me the offer, sir, but I'm a sailing-ship man to the core and I don't think I should cotton to a change so late along. They tell me there's a man called a chief engineer who always has a lot to say; and I could never stand a divided authority."

"Still," urged the owner, "you'd be better to fall into line. Take the *Trinidad;* give her a trial voyage anyhow, and don't be so hasty in your decisions."

But Brookes wouldn't have it. He asked for an hour in which to make his decision, and went down to the dock where they were fitting the steamer out: a big, pot-bellied warehouse, meant to carry the last ounce of cargo; with nothing beautiful about her; steel decks, winches, derricks, all complete. Then he went back to the office, Hayes with him.

"I've thought it over," he said. "It's kind of you to put up with me for as long as you have done; but my mind's made up. A sailing-ship man I've lived; a sailing-ship man I'll die, please God."

"I don't think we can find you another berth," said the owner, who had a fondness for the veteran.

"I'm not wanting one," said Brookes. "I've saved enough since my wife died to allow me to finish in moderate comfort; and so I'll say good-by to the sea once and for all."

That's how he came to leave the sea; but he didn't go far from it. He found a bit of a house on the cliff overlooking the harbor he'd sailed out of so long, and there he settled down. Hayes wanted to go with him; I believe the old boatswain actually wept when he knew they'd sailed their last voyage together; but Brookes wouldn't hear of it.

"I've got nothing for you to do," he said, "and you're not the man to live on charity; besides, I can't afford to keep you. I can manage for myself, but you've got daughters to think of, and their mouths require filling.

"I'll speak to the owners about getting you a bo'sun's job on one of their steamers, as they haven't any wind-jammers left, my man."

Hayes was for refusing pointblank; but the skipper sized him up sharply.

"Think that because I'm off the *Hope's* poop I haven't any authority?" he asked. "You go and do as you're told, bo'sun."

OLD BROOKES settled down ashore, according to his way of it. That is to say, he had a flagstaff put up in the garden of his cottage on the cliffs, and every morning he would take a quarter-deck walk for a couple of hours. If he sighted a sailing-ship in the distance he counted his day fruitful; but if, as was more commonly the case, he saw nothing but steamers, he used to revile the present times, swear that they couldn't compare with the good old days, and be as grumpy as a bear with a sore head.

He developed a habit, too, of wandering down to the docks, in the attitude of a critic, mark you; and from what I gather some of his remarks concerning the modern trend of seafaring matters were illuminating, to say the least. He could find no beauties in a steamer; and steamboat men he treated as inferiors.

"There aren't any sailors," he would say to the trim, dapper steamboat men who tripped ashore wearing kid gloves and sometimes silk hats. "Sailorizing is an extinct art. Don't talk to me; I know what I'm speaking about."

Naturally enough, he was laughed at behind his back; and some of the spruce youngsters would get him to talk of old days and old ways, drawing him out until he tumbled to it that they were pulling his leg, and then he shut down pretty smartly.

And so a year passed, and another, and another. Every time Hayes got home he walked straight to the cottage on the cliff and reported himself as having come aboard, sir. He hadn't much of an opinion of steamboating, either; he criticized as freely as the skipper did; and they used to send topsail-yards down until further orders.

"Lot o' squareheads an' sodgers," said Hayes, describing his last crew. "Couldn't find a man to put on a palm-an'-needle hitchin' last trip; as for a long splice—they ain't got it in 'em, sir."

"They don't splice now," said Brookes. "They rivet. We're out of date, bos'un; we're out of date."

In away it was mighty pathetic to see these two old codgers living in B. C. and

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blinding themselves to the advantages of A. D.

"Used to think my darters fine girls," said Hayes, "when I saw 'em once a year, say, or mebbe every two years. But seein' 'em once a month—well, sir, there was that to be said about wind-jammers; they did keep you out o' the way o' the women."

Four years went by, and five; and then—Captain Bailey of the *Barbados* died suddenly just as the ship was ready to leave port. The *Barbados* was one of the firm's older steamers, and she was lying at the Mercury Dock waiting for her tugs when Bailey dropped and slipped his cable without a moment's warning.

The steamer carried a Dutch mate with an English mate's ticket; he wasn't qualified to take command. Lying alongside the *Barbados* was the *St. Lucia,* which had been in dock only two days; but they'd taken her skipper out and had sent him to the Tyne, to take over the *Queensland.*

As a result they hadn't a single skipper within easy distance, and the *Barbados* was late in sailing as it was. They sent for old Brookes in a hurry and asked him to take the command to get them out of a difficulty; he was easily accessible.

Perhaps it was that the old man was sick of the shore; perhaps he had the gift of seeing into the future; anyhow he accepted the crib, carted a change of clothes down with him and installed himself in the captain's room, with his old sextant and everything in order. He allowed the pilot to take charge of the bridge while they were working out of dock, and studied the hang of matters thoughtfully, saying little.

He hadn't much of an opinion of his Dutch mate, but as the *Barbados* had patent anchors there was really nothing in the chief's work to criticize. And the chief engineer was busy below.

As soon as the pilot had left and Brookes was on his own entirely he began to feel mighty lonely. There wasn't a familiar face about him; everything was strange and bare. He missed the familiar rustle and throb of the canvas; he missed the cries of the sailors on the braces; he missed his broad white poop on which to walk.

And just as he was feeling most miserable he heard a sort of discreet cough behind his elbow; and, turning, he found himself face to face with Hayes.

"Come aboard, sir," said Hayes.

Brookes smiled first, frowned afterward.

"What the deuce are you doing aboard here?" he asked in his best quarter-deck manner. "You're aboard the *St. Lucia*: I arranged with the owners that you should retain that berth so long as you gave satisfaction."

Hayes spat carefully over the lee side, hitched his pants and explained:

"*St. Lucia* or no *St. Lucia,*" he said, "I heard as how you was coming here, sir, so I come too. That's all. Think I was goin' to sail in one ship an' you in another? Not me!"

"But—but how did you do it? What about the bosun here, the rightful bosun?"

Hayes scratched his head at that.

"Well," he said, "to tell no lies, I kicked him over the rail. He was only a Swede, anyhow; no 'count. I puts it to him, offered him to change, but he said no.

"So I changed him as best I could. He nipped over the rail like as if a bucko Yankee mate was after him with a gun. Now sir, I'm ready for orders."

Brookes tried to be angry; but, bless you, he couldn't be! Here was a face he knew, a man he'd tried and proved worthy; a sailing-ship man at that. To be sure, he gave the bosun a dressing down, tongue-lashed him until he was breathless; but at the end of it Hayes was grinning all over.

"That's something like old times, sir," he said. "Swear a bit more, please, sir; these new-fashioned folks always says, 'Please,' and 'Thank you.' It makes me feel young again to hear them fine round curses a-rollin' off your tongue, sir."

So Brookes obliged him for about five minutes more without repeating himself, and at the end of that time he held out his hand and shook the boatswain's horny fist.

"I'm glad you're here," he said. "But you'll take this from me: we'll have discipline aboard this craft; and you'll come and speak to me in future when you're sent for, not before."

Hayes's presence aboard made the ship tolerable; Brookes quarreled with the chief engineer the first day out because he came on the bridge in a temper and tried to swear down the skipper for not having the stoke-hole ventilators properly trimmed.

Now aboard his blessed old *Good Hope*

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Brookes had held all three justices—the high, the middle and the low; and he wasn't happy at being spoken to in this fashion. He told the chief engineer so; he told him so in about fourteen different ways; and the engineer, who'd been used to running things much to his own liking with the previous skipper, went off with a flea in his ear.

It might have been a very entertaining voyage, for the Dutch mate was a white-livered coward and the second mate was a youngster easily swayed; whilst the crew —well, you know what the average steamboat crowd is. There were a couple of Russian Finns, a dago, a low-down cockney and two nondescripts in the forecastle; the engine-room staff was composed of anything that could be picked up.

There never had been any discipline worth speaking about; the last boatswain, whom Hayes had kicked over the rail, was a weakling; and the men had done what they liked with him. I believe that Brookes saw a lot of things that didn't please him, and he complained at times, too, but he was assured that such ways were steamer ways; and he didn't assert himself just at first, preferring to get the hang of events.

He missed the sails, though; he missed them greatly. Somehow he couldn't cotton to handling a ship with a little brass wheel and a telegraph; and his first action when about to alter course was always to look aloft—to see how the yards lay, of course. When he saw nothing but a bare pole with some spidery rigging they say his face would contort as if he were in actual pain.

HAYES understood what was the matter with him, though, and decided to amend matters.

He asked the mate's permission to get up such fragments of sails as the steamer owned; they were carried away below, under a lot of cargo; but when a bit of a gale blew up that put painting and chipping out of the question, Hayes saw his opportunity and applied for permission to ferret them out.

The mate laughed at the idea; I don't think he'd ever seen a sail at close quarters. So Hayes watched his chance and buttonholed the skipper, just at a time when he was about fed up with steamers generally.

"She'd look a bit more homelike with the flimsies up," said Hayes, cocking his eyes at the masthead light. "A bit o' fore-an-aft canvas up there now, sir; it would make a difference. You'd be able to listen to the wind in it, if it was there; she'd get a bit of a slant on her decks in this blow, too; not always be as level as a plank."

And the mere thought of it made the skipper's mouth water.

"I'd get them up if I were you," he said. "I'll tell the mate I've given orders."

So Hayes set to work; and as the sails were deep down the crew had to work hard, which they didn't like. Result was they grew to hate Hayes very much, and the skipper too. The mate encouraged them a bit in this, I'd say.

So, as I remarked, it promised to be a very entertaining voyage; but just when they were about 44 north and 35 west—clean out of the track of shipping, because Brookes would steer his own course as he'd always been accustomed to steer it—they hit a gale that simply flattened them out. Blow! It was that December when Lloyds had to pay up on fourteen ships in four days; you'll remember it!

The wind started away from the sou'-west with hurricane force, clipping up out of a livid yellow sky; and for twelve hours it took the *Barbados* and played with her as if she were a toy. The seas swept her clean; she took a bit of a list too, for her cargo shifted; and she generally made something of a hog of herself.

Brookes enjoyed this no end; he was never in finer form than when it was blowing its hardest; the song of a gale was the sweetest music he had ever known.

Hayes entered into the spirit of the thing, too; he took the insufficient crew about the decks into the thick of the fight, gave them ropes to haul on and made them sing chanteys and pully-hauly songs as they worked. Brookes was very happy because, the gale being enough to make any sailing-ship shorten down to topsails, he didn't notice the bareness of the masts so much.

It blew for twelve hours and then it shifted away to the west of north and came away with twice the force; snow with it, too; a regular Atlantic blizzard. The *Barbados* was a bit of a tub at the best; but this time she made a perfect hog of herself.

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Brookes said he was making his first trip in steam and he sincerely hoped it would be his last. There wasn't any buoyancy about the craft; and the jar of the propeller as she pitched set his nerves on edge. He missed the wide sweep of the poop, too; on the bridge he felt he could never get out of the watch-officer's way.

In the middle of the gale, just when the ship was playing Ring-a-Round-of Roses with herself, there came a bit of a jar, a sudden shiver, and then—the rumble of the decks died away. The *Barbados* had twisted off her propeller and dropped it to the bottom of the Atlantic.

THINGS happened pretty suddenly then. The steamer fell off into the trough, of course; and a comber swept her clean. It shifted practically everything that was movable except the two life-boats; and it struck Brookes down where he stood on the bridge, smashed his head up against a stanchion and left him lying crumpled up and useless in the lee corner.

That sight knocked the heart clean out of the Dutch mate; and when the crew came to the bridge and said they weren't for dying like rats in a trap, he consulted with the chief engineer, who said the stoke-hole plates were already awash.

"The skipper's dead, anyway," said the mate. "That sea killed him, smashed his head like an egg-shell; see, there's the blood on my fingers yet."

As the crew heard this they naturally panicked one-time; they said the ship was done for, and they were going to leave her. The mate did try to dissuade them a bit, I believe, but he'd never had them in hand and they only threw things at him.

He appealed to the chief engineer to back him up, but he had got his bellyful of it; and as he had carried a large stack of whisky with him he was not in a condition to vote pro or con. In the result they swung out the boats, provisioned them roughly and, taking advantage of a momentary lull, abandoned the ship.

They pulled away into the snow and spindrift and vanished, leaving old Brookes crumpled up on the bridge, insensible. He wasn't dead; it took more than one blow to knock a man of his stamp out. But he lay there for hours with the seas making clean breaches over the decks and the sprays laving his face and the ice setting on his beard and mustache. The snow piled on him, too; he was almost buried beneath a mound of it when consciousness returned.

He pulled himself up and was aware of pain and sickness; he hauled himself to windward; he looked out on a yelling inferno of spite and wrath. The sea was tremendous, rolling and roaring in mountainous fury so far as the eye could reach—not far, for the snow shut out most of the seascape. The spindrift beat wildly across the wave-crests and filled the hollows; it lashed against the tattered weather-cloth like grape-shot; and lying there in the trough the *Barbados* plunged and rolled soddenly, her bulwarks gaping and every movable thing gone by the board.

Brookes found his whistle and blew it hard; the wind threw the sound back in his face. He blew again; there was no response.

He hung on to the whistle lanyard; but that brought him no result. The engineers had blown off the boilers whilst he lay unconscious; there was no steam. So he blew and blew with his fragments of strength fading away; he leaned over the rail in what was almost a state of collapse.

Little by little the truth dawned upon him; he had been abandoned utterly; he was left alone with the ship on a deserted sea. He told me the shock and the bitterness of it all were too great to be borne; he collapsed over the rail and wept; yes, the old sea-fighter wept. He couldn't say exactly why; but he felt as if the bottom had dropped out of things.

But there was a streak of gladness through the sadness—he was dying in harness. He had once prayed to die afloat; a man's death, not a cow's; face to face with a heavens-hard gale, pitting his strength against its strength, his cunning against its deviltry; and here was his wish being realized.

But the loneliness of it tore at his soul; it filled him with sick despair. He dropped lower and lower, clawing at the rails, not caring whether he lived or died.

"THIS'LL buck ye up a bit, sir," came a voice at his ear just when he reached the nadir of desolation; and as he turned gropingly a pannikinful of hot, steaming grog was thrust into his

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hands. "It ain't rum, but it's the best I could do—whisky; and it's hot."

Brookes told me he could not believe the evidence of his senses; it was as if he had received a visitation from another world. But he dashed the snow away from his eyes and looked, and there was Hayes with blood coagulated on his face, disheveled, weary, salt-grimed, but still Hayes.

"It'll buck ye up, sir; drink it," said the bo'sun; and Brookes drank, every drop.

The spirit—it was a regular nor'wester—coursed through him like living fire; it spurred him; it brought back his strength and his courage. And yet it wasn't only the spirit; it was the sight of a known face in the midst of all that desolation. Hayes was there, the man he had befriended in the past; and he recognized now that what had hurt him most was the thought of the old man's defection.

"What's happened, and where's the crew?" he asked as soon as he could get his breath. "Why didn't any one come when I whistled?"

"Because they're all gone," said Hayes, "every living coward of 'em. I tried to stop them; I swore I'd break the head of the first man who cast a lashing adrift; but they chucked me on one side; they were mad with fear.

"Then I started up to find you, sir; and the Dutch mate he knocked me out with a batten—here."

He indicated a gaping wound across his head, enough to have killed a man with a less tough skull than the old colt's. And he said that he had gone down unsonscious, although he must have instinctively crawled away to shelter; because when he came to his senses he was lying snugged up in the alleyway just by the chief engineer's door, and a smell of whisky was in his nostrils.

He started in to explore and found the skipper lying in the snow on the bridge. Recognizing that he was still just alive, he had remembered the olden times; he remembered the smell of whisky that had greeted him as he awoke from unconsciousness, and—the sequence was inevitable.

Somehow—he was a sailing-ship man, and resourceful—he had contrived to light a fire in the galley; he had boiled water; and when it was hot and hot, he had brewed the grog, filled the pannikin, covered it with a cloth and—well, there it was. He had not fallen to the temptation himself; spirits had not touched his lips, although the fight must have been a hard one.

He was wet to the skin, shivering; but he had taken no thought to himself; all that concerned him was that his old skipper should have his chance.

When Brookes had emptied the pannikin he pulled himself together and faced his boatswain squarely.

"Why didn't you go when the others went?" he asked.

"Well," said Hayes, "I just couldn't; I just couldn't. It had got sort of a habit with me, sir, to stand by you, an'—well, old habits cling. If they hadn't knocked me out I'd have stopped 'em, steamboat men as they were!"

I gathered there was a good deal of disgust in his voice as he spoke. And he said nothing of the temptation to leave the ship with the others that had beset him when he heard the skipper was dead; that was a matter for his own heart alone.

They stood there on the wave-swept bridge, ducking to the fall of the water, and stared out over the bleak wilderness. Brookes's courage had returned; he had obtained the stimulus he needed, more from the companionship than the grog.

He turned to Hayes, who was almost dropping on his feet from weakness and pain, and noticed the other's sufferings. He swore at Hayes then, and because his throat was choking he swore hard.

He ordered the boatswain into the chartroom and attended to him there; he gave Hayes a taste of Hayes's own medicine; and all the time the *Barbados* threw herself about in an ugly fashion, writhing and squirming to the attacks of the seas. In a little while Hayes, who had fainted as he was shoved into the chartroom, came to himself, looked like himself and got to his feet.

"Any orders, sir?" he asked in the old way.

Brookes nearly fell on his neck with delight, and because his heart was so full he swore again.

"If they've gone in the boats, we've no way of gettin off," he said. "All that remains seems to be to go down with her, bo'sun. We're too old to stand weeks on a raft, aren't we? And there are your

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daughters to consider; you'd have been better to go when you had the chance."

"My darters can look after themselves," said Hayes. "I've allus wanted to die fighting. But the ship's not gone yet. She's lost her propeller, yes; but she's still floating."

And those words brought a faint new hope into Brookes's heart. They brought the old fighting light into his eyes, too; he smacked the boatswain on the back.

"She's not a steamer any longer," he said joyously. "We know what to do with her now; she's ours to do what we like with. They used to laugh at me for being an old fool—don't deny it, because I've heard them; but we'll see who laughs last. Bo'sun, come with me and we'll inspect the ship."

That's what it had been in the old days; every other morning Brookes would make a systematic inspection of the *Hope*—things to terrify a careless mate, those inspections!

They groped their way down from the bridge, and surveyed the barren decks; they went from there to the forecastle, and, steadying themselves against the force of the wind, inspected her afresh. The seas smote at them savagely, but they'd defeated bigger seas than these, and they were not afraid.

They ignored the engine-room altogether, remember; it was out of their province; but they sounded the wells and found only about three feet of water in the holds, a trifle that had leaked in through the stern-gland.

"We'll take her into port, bo'sun," said Brookes after his tour, "or we'll know the reason why. We'll see who gets the laugh; we or the white-livered cowards who abandoned their ship on the first sign of trouble. Just you and I together; the old school against the new; sail against steam; but it means work."

"Right you are, sir," said Hayes. "Where'll we begin, Cap'n Brookes?"

Imagine these two old men, men who'd done their work, daring to think of such a thing! Incredible, eh? A nightmare, a delusion; but they were in deadly earnest. They wouldn't throw up the sponge so long as life flowed in them; they were the old fighting breed; never finer than in the hour of impending defeat.

"We'll get a bit of canvas on her aft, to bring her head to the sea," said Brookes; "that will do for a start. After that we'll be guided by circumstances, bo'sun, and do such things as are best suited for the welfare of the ship."

Picture them, then, stumbling aft along the slanting decks, hanging on to one another, to anything they could grip; reaching the after-hatch down which the canvas was stowed; groping about below until they found what they sought, heaving it up on deck with crab-winches; bending a staysail on the mainmast, hoisting it even; big work, that, for two old men.

But they did it because it was a personal matter; one school of thought against another. It was dark night before they had finished; but presently the staysail aft was taut and trim, and it brought the steamer's bow up against the sea, and allowed her to ride through the hours of darkness in comparative safety—not in comfort, mark you.

And all through that night the two old men kept the bleak bridge, humoring the unwieldy craft as best they could—they'd shipped the hand steering-gear—easing her to the might of the waters; battling heroically.

THE gale lasted forty-eight hours after the crew abandoned the *Barbados*; and it never let up for a single minute. They took it in turns to handle the wheel; snatching naps occasionally, eating when they were ready to faint with hunger and not before.

There were just the two of them, alone but indomitable, two old shipmates, who had read into each other's hearts and knew that what they had seen there was good. At times Brookes felt like throwing it up and abandoning the ship in the best way he could; but at such times he'd only to look at old Hayes and to remember how the boatswain had stuck by him, to find a fresh fund of strength and pluck; and so they fought on gamely, refusing to accept defeat when by all ordinary laws they were down and out everlastingly.

The gale lulled and they both fell asleep on the floor of the wheel-house, unable to endure longer. The scrap of sail aft kept the steamer across the seas, though she rode them splendidly. Brookes

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told Hayes that he began to feel a certain amount of fondness for the craft as he saw how she behaved.

"Well, why shouldn't ye?" asked Hayes. "She ain't a steamer any longer; she's a sailing-ship—one of *our* kind!"

This was after they wakened from the deep sleep of utter exhaustion.

"And a sailing-ship we'll make her, by the living jingo!" said Hayes. "If we aren't sailors enough to take her to port ourselves, we deserve to be disrated."

They set to work afresh—cruel, pitiless work; but they refused to be beaten down. They found other canvas and rigged it for'ard; insufficient enough it was, charred and dirty; but still it was canvas, and they knew how to handle it.

Brookes told me that if he'd had half a dozen men with him he'd have converted the *Barbados* into a brig and sailed her over the seas of all the world; but they hadn't six men, and they were compelled to do what they could alone.

They added to her canvas, though; curious it must have appeared. They found awnings and fixed them up as bonnets to the staysails; they worked like slaves all day and kept watch and watch all night. When it blew half a gale they got three knots out of the ship; but as a rule they contented themselves with two knots an hour.

And they didn't try particularly to get into the track of shipping—steamers, that is. They went where experience had taught Brookes the strongest and fairest winds could be found; and when a chance steamer did heave in sight and signal to know if they required a tow Brookes signaled back:

"Tow be hanged! I've had enough of steamers," spelling it out word by word in the International Code.

"We've brought her through so far," he told Hayes; "and, by Jove, we'll make a sporting finish!"

And they did; they did. It took them a matter of two and half months to get the ship to port because in anything less than a snorter she stuck fast; but they persevered.

The last three days their provisions gave out—there'd been some mismanagement on the part of the steward about the emergency stock—and just when they were feeling the pinch of hunger worst they were signaled by another steamer, offering to give them a tow. Brookes looked at Hayes when they read off the message; he saw that the bo'sun was starving; his face was sunken, his eyes unnaturally bright.

"You can abandon the ship now if you like," he said gruffly to hide his emotion. "You've not done so badly, bosun. They'll take you off if I signal 'em."

For once in his life Hayes was insubordinate. He shook his fist in old Brookes's face; he danced up and down in front of him.

"Abandon her now!" he yelled. "Me abandon her now! You say that again, sir, an' I'll—I'll—I'll break my pledge for good."

So they sent the same message as before to the steamer, and continued.

They say that when the pilot boarded the *Barbados* he saw two old, white-haired men standing side by side on the bridge, staring forward with curious smiles on their lips; and that when he spoke they merely dropped together at his feet—literally starved. No, not dead; they weren't the dying kind. Hayes was absolutely fainting; but Brookes still retained his senses enough to say:

"Mind, I'm in command here: there's no question of salvage. Let the tugs get hold."

THE Colonial Line decided they'd done a big thing—the *Barbados* had been given up as missing when they found one of her boats containing the dead men and—ugh!—some nasty fragments; and her return was totally unlooked for. They offered—they tried to insist on it—command of a big new steamer to Brookes; a crackerjack packet, the joy of the Colonial Line; but he shook his head.

"Can't get on with steam somehow," he said. "If it was a sailing-ship, now——"

So they bought him a sailing-ship all for himself, and he's in command still, with Hayes as his boatswain; and I believe they make that antediluvian windjammer pay handsomely.

And every time there's hard weather or fog Hayes walks aft with a steaming pannikin in his hand. And, "Here y'are, sir," he says; "drink this; it'll warm ye up—put new heart into ye."

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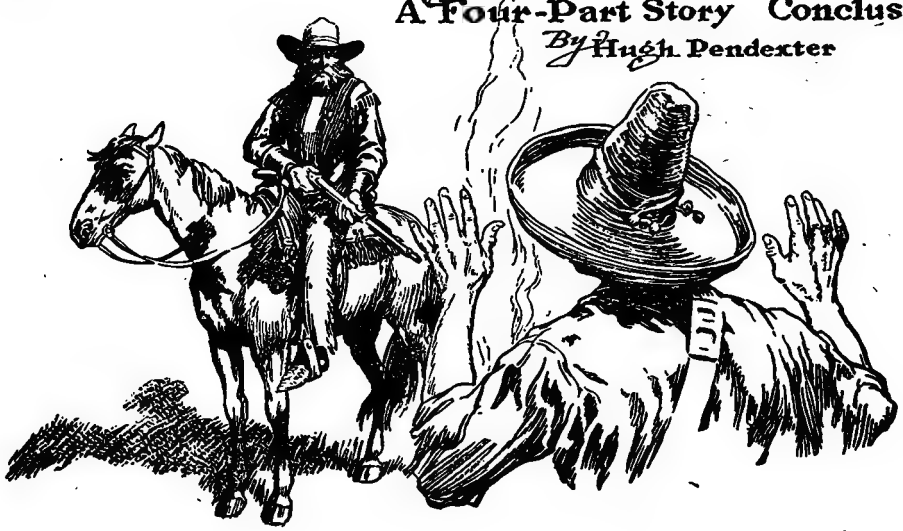
The Gate Through The Mountain

A Four-Part Story Conclusion

By Hugh Pendexter



Author of "When Kentucky Starved," "Red Belts," etc.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE PATH OF TRAGEDY

IT WAS midday when Uncle Dick rode into Cimarron City, hungry and disgusted. Stubbornness had held him to the trail; for reason told him his chances of running into any of the outlaws were very slim. Jack Free's new friend at the Whoa-Haw saloon must have been a member of the gang, else there was no reason for the killer's attack on a man who was a stranger to him. No, there was no question but that one of the outlaws had incited the attempt at murder, and this because the gang had decided it was time the mountaineer was removed. This being the case, the man escaping south down the trail would not fail to warn his companions.

He wondered if he would not have had better luck had he followed out his first plan and journeyed back to the Purgatory. Only the stage-driver's insistence that he had seen Chuckle-Luck and Keene on the south side of the slope had influenced Uncle Dick to seek the leader of the band on this side of the pass. The man in the Happy Fortune bar who had induced Free to attempt murder, was similar in appearance to any one of a thousand border rovers. Inasmuch as Free had never been known to engage in any lawlessness, outside of his mania for killing, Uncle Dick had not suspected the desperado's friend to be a member of the band of road-agents.

The pursuit from the burning buildings, however, and the repeated shots from the darkness ahead, connected with a reviving memory of the characters who had patronized the station eating-room, was convincing him he had been exchanging lead with Chuckle-Luck. The smoking lamps, his own cramped position on the settle and the man's trick of concealing his features with scarf and hat, had made any identification very dubious. If the man were Chuckle-Luck, the mountaineer believed he had been off his trail for the last twenty-four hours.

He had had various opportunities for making inquiries along the trail and, curiously enough, while obtaining no news which would indicate that Chuckle-Luck was ahead, he did gather from one detailed description that Sam Keene was riding hard for Cimarron City. This bit of information

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was given him by "Pecos" Frank, an extra driver who was taking Turkey Bill's coach through. From the driver's laconic remarks, Uncle Dick concluded Turkey Bill was incapacitated by drink. As a news item, this was surprizing and afforded matter for deep cogitation for those who were acquainted with Bill's immunity in the matter of drink.

"Any way, he wa'n't on hand. They sent me out," concluded Pecos Frank.

The driver then spoke of a galloping horseman, and his description, given by one trained in observation, satisfied Uncle Dick that Keene was at Cimarron or pushing farther south.

With his thoughts still on Keene, the mountaineer hitched his horse outside the long, low eating-house and entered. He was weary from his strenuous experiences and threw himself heavily down upon the first vacant seat. A grunt of surprize across the board caused him to glance up, and he found himself gazing into Baptiste's little eyes.

"Strayed off your reservation?" growled Uncle Dick in no good humor for meeting the breed.

"I'm here, Mr. Wooton, on business," sullenly informed Baptiste.

"I pity the poor devil on the other side of the bargain," jeered Uncle Dick.

Baptiste scowled; then, simulated indifference to the slur and calmly continued:

"There's a reward for dead outlaws. I'm going to collect on the one buried at Muddy Creek."

"That's the business you referred to?"

"That's the business, and I'll trade a good profit. The expenses won't be much."

"You take it off both the dead and the living," softly remarked Uncle Dick.

"The Overland Company is glad to pay the reward."

"So you've toted the stiff way down here, I reckon."

"I have not." Baptiste smiled knowingly. "I understand you don't like me, Mr. Wooton, but you ain't the kind to spoil any man's honest business deals."

He paused, as if inclined to say more but not quite satisfied as to whether it would be safe.

"I ain't out to spike any man's game that ain't crooked," gruffly assured Uncle Dick.

"I knew it," murmured Baptiste. "Well, there's been so much robbing up the trail that I think the Overland Company will be willing to raise their price. I want to sell on a high market."

"Of all the dod-burned, cold-blooded—Huh! I s'pose you can't help it. It's in your natur' and just has to crop out. How long you been here negotiating your sweet-smelling trade proposition?"

"I just come in ahead of you," sullenly replied the trader.

"Seems to be a lot of folks on the street. Yet they're mighty quiet and sober, for Cimarron. Didn't know but what you would *sabe* the reason."

"I noticed the people. I didn't ask no questions."

A man at the next table, who had overheard the question, turned to Uncle Dick and loudly informed:

"Good time for a crowd to be out. Good reason for 'em to be thoughtful, although a few drinks wouldn't be out of order. There's some grim business ahead for this town."

"I see," said Uncle Dick. "As to which?"

"As to two of Gentleman Ralph's gang what's in limbo here. Going to hang 'em at sunset."

On hearing this piece of information Baptiste dropped his knife on his plate with a clatter. Uncle Dick bent his gaze on his informant for a moment; then asked—

"Do you happen to know if one of the cusses is Chuckle-Luck?"

The citizen shook his head and returned to bolting his food, evidently anxious to get through the meal and mingle with the crowd outside, so as to miss none of the sport. To make himself perfectly plain he volunteered—

"Neither ain't."

"More the pity," sighed Uncle Dick. Then maliciously to the breed trader—"Too bad you can't sell them for the reward."

"Mr. Wooton, I don't like the way you speak," protested Baptiste. "I'm a honest trader. Money is offered by the Overland people for a certain article. I can supply it. Only now I'm worried that this killing two of them here in one day will put the price down."

A new thought popped into Uncle Dick's head and he demanded:

"How can you claim all the reward?

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Doesn't Sam Keene come in for half of it?"

"Mr. Wooton, that man isn't any good. Besides, when I bought his trade whisky I bought his good-will. That includes any claim he may have had on the certain goods I've spoke to you about."

"Don't doubt it. That's a sensible business view of it," gently agreed the mountaineer. "I just happened to mention it, as I knew Keene was down here. Didn't know but what you two come together to divvy on the reward."

Baptiste slumped back and glared wildly at Uncle Dick.

"Keene down here? Ain't you joking, Mr. Wooton?"

"Maybe I'm mistook, but he was ahead of me on the trail and heading fast this way. Don't reckon he'd pass without stopping. Perhaps he heard two of the gang was rounded up and decided his business took him farther south."

Baptiste's dark face lighted up and he whispered—

"Mr. Wooton, I reckon you and me think the same thoughts at times."

"The —— we do!" growled Uncle Dick.

BAPTISTE decided he had satisfied his appetite, and rose and departed before Uncle Dick could offer to go along with him. In fact, there was an abruptness in his leave-taking that strongly suggested a desire to be alone. Uncle Dick and the man at the next table rose together, and the stranger said:

"I'm Sim Hopkins, in trade at Las Vegas. I come up here with a bunch of our boys and we was invited to stay over and see that the two chaps at the jail ain't run off by any of their friends. Cimarron's all right, I tell folks, but when you want things done, or don't want certain things done, they just have to draw on old Las Vegas. We're always glad to 'commodate."

"I'm Dick Wooton. Toll-gate up on Raton."

"Lord love a duck! Reckon my freight has paid you enough toll for us to be acquainted. Powerful glad to see you, Mr. Wooton."

"Uncle Dick is my handle to honest folks," corrected the mountaineer. "Such critters as that half-breed, Baptiste, I let mister me. Keeps 'em at a distance, like a fence."

"Uncle Dick it is then, with all my heart. Shall we walk up toward the jail and see how things is going?"

This was agreeable to Wooton, and the two set forth and quickly observed that more men had entered the town while they were at the table. Some of these newcomers kept apart in little groups. All looked to be desperate fellows. One could not judge by appearances, however, as the most lawless-appearing band proved to be deputy sheriffs from Las Vegas, present to prevent Gentleman Ralph from making a rescue.

Hopkins knew these men and introduced Uncle Dick, who was cordially greeted, there being none of the Las Vegas people who did not know him by reputation. One of them, a young man with long corn-colored hair, told the mountaineer:

"No doubt but what Cimarron needs our help. There's some of Ralph's men passing by us most of the time. But he's got a big gang and lots of his men are new to us. Come here from Californy and never used Las Vegas as a stamping-ground, so we can't tag them. We're hoping they'll give themselves away by trying to rush the jail."

"Who's the two you snagged?" asked Uncle Dick.

"Uncle Dick, that's s'posed to be a secret till we're ready to swing 'em," interrupted Hopkins.

"Oh, I didn't go for to be forward. Good idee to keep it dark. Keeps the gang guessing. S'pose you've got a clear case against 'em?"

"Tolerable," said the young deputy. "One's caught with some marked coins on him. The company shipped a small box of double eagles. Caught the sucker the first thing. T'other chap was chinning with him mighty confidential and tried to make a break when the Cimarron sheriff come up. Best to be on the safe side and hang both of 'em."

"I reckon," agreed Uncle Dick. "When in doubt as to the cusses, let 'em stretch a rope. If you make a mistake you can repent at leisure."

They had now approached within two hundred feet of the squat, solid structure which served as a jail, and the deputy halted them, saying:

"Sorry, but we mustn't go any nearer. If you wasn't friends of mine you'd 'a' been turned back at the corner where my mates are."

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"Not taking any chances on the wrong crowd getting close," observed Hopkins.

"Oh, the boys know you two is all right. You're with me," was the naive response. "But the idee is to leave the street clear and free in front of the jail. Then, if a bunch goes to ker-whooping up here, we know they're part of the gang and every one shoots to please hisself."

Uncle Dick touched the deputy's arm and nodded toward a desperate-looking character who wore his hair, mustache and two revolvers very long. This individual was several paces ahead of them and lounging indolently beside a packing-box. The deputy grinned and explained:

"Las Vegas sheriff—our boss. The agents would suspect some trap if no one wa'n't on deck. The sheriff seems to be the only man ready for gun-play, but let something bust loose and there'll be twenty men and forty guns backing him up."

"I can see them looking out the window," said Hopkins, jerking his head toward the jail. "One dodged back. Now t'other one does. But Turkey Bill was always slow on his feet."

"Turkey Bill! Hypering ——!" exclaimed Uncle Dick. "Mean to tell me that non-fighting critter is mixed up in this deal?"

The deputy looked his confusion and mumbled:

"I didn't mean to let on. Kinder slipped out, but so long as the jailer let them get to the winder, reckon I ain't give away much. Might as well finish. Turkey had his jeans filled with them marked gold-pieces. The trick was expected to cost the company a round sum, but —— if they don't bag two men and get most of the coin back!"

"But that Turkey Bill never had guts enough to fight a rabbit!" expostulated Uncle Dick.

"But he had head enough to tip off the gang when a extry fat box was going through. That's proved and clinched fast enough. He had a woman down to Las Vegas and got to spending lots of his off time down there. We folks began to notice—Hopkins here was one of the first—that she was being provided for right lib'ral. Turkey 'lowed he was lucky at gambling. We let it go at that, but the marked coins give him away. No matter how cute they be, they're sure goners once they have anything to do with a petticoat."

"The marked coins was a cute trick. Seems expensive, but it ain't so much so as being robbed two or three times a week," observed Hopkins. "New slant for the company to take."

"Yes, sirre! We folks down here sorter feel the company's set a new man after the gang."

"Who's t'other chap? One that ducked back from the winder?" asked Uncle Dick.

"We're still holding out fifty per cent. of their names," reminded Hopkins with a grin.

The deputy colored at having his slip recalled. Uncle Dick apologized profusely, declaring:

"Honest to Hen, Hopkins, I plumb forgot! Once I got the name of one, I grew as keen as a woman to know the rest. I won't breathe a word about what I already know."

"That's all right," heartily assured Hopkins. "Makes me feel cheap not to tell everything, but our sheriff wanted it played this way. Come back to the bar and punish some strong water. Too many horses kicking up dust, for a man afoot."

"Dust always poisoned me," admitted Uncle Dick.

THEIR escort regretted that his official duties precluded his accompanying them, and they left him at the corner with his mates. As they entered the bar, Uncle Dick rubbed his eyes and stared eagerly at the back of a man about to take a drink. This man carried one arm in a sling. Uncle Dick stepped to one side in a sly reconnaissance. Hopkins, thinking his new friend was about to meet an enemy, loosened his gun and stood ready to see fair play. To his astonishment Uncle Dick gave a whoop, clapped the man on the shoulder, seized his left hand and shook it warmly.

"Cussed if it ain't Joe Peace!" snorted Hopkins, joining in the hand-shaking. "What's wrong with your gun-hand, Joe?"

"Hurt it," evaded Joe.

"How's things up the pass, Joe?" anxiously asked Uncle Dick.

"Fine. The young lady is in high spirits. Only waiting for you to come back to be perfectly happy."

"I didn't know—" began Hopkins, then coughed.

"My adopted daughter," snapped Uncle Dick.

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"That's what I didn't know," softly explained Hopkins.

Peace laughed; then grew sober and asked:

"I've just come in. What's all the men mean? Haven't seen a man drunk, yet every one seems to be on the street."

"Got two road-agents waiting to be strung up," informed Hopkins.

"——'s hinges! You don't tell me! Why, that gang will be whittled to pieces if it keeps on losing them two at a lick. Who are they?"

"They're keeping the names under their hats, Joe. Wouldn't even tell me, Hopkins wouldn't," broke in Uncle Dick as the Las Vegas man began to show confusion.

"Probably a fool arrangement, but there's so many yarns about Gentleman Ralph being in town and ready to steal his men away that we promised each other to keep shet till it's time to noose them. We reckon the gang has scattered and that they don't know who's missing for sure. Howsomever, it'll soon be known to everybody."

"If they're agents, that's all that counts," grimly declared Peace. "They'll hang as dead by one name as by another."

"Still, we're only picking round the edges so long as their boss goes free," Hopkins gloomily remarked. "We've got men scattered all over the place ready to pick up any suspicious looking stranger. That's the —— of not having a description of him!"

"His men must know him. They've probably told," said Peace, turning back to the bar, measuring out a drink and passing the bottle.

"If any of them talked, we don't know it," growled Hopkins, filling his glass. "One of our prisoners is hopeless. Can't get a word out of him. T'other one will blab, I reckon, but he ain't done so yet. Well, let's ease that drink home with a companion."

Hopkins' round was disposed of and Uncle Dick insisted that the circle be completed, but the drinking, neither among the three friends nor in the other groups, was marked with the usual jollity. A low buzz of suppressed excitement pervaded the room. Each time a man, or a party of men, entered, every head was turned to make an appraisal. Suspense, attending the firm belief that Gentleman Ralph would audaciously attempt some trick, was in the air. As the three were finishing Uncle Dick's round, the young deputy sheriff bustled in, his heavy holsters flapping against his legs. Uncle Dick ordered a drink for him.

"Just relieved from duty," he announced.

Uncle Dick made him and Peace known to each other and the latter asked—

"Taking turns standing guard?"

"No. That is—well, it ain't necessary. Jail's so strong."

"Peace is a friend of mine and Uncle Dick's. He's all right," said Hopkins.

"Oh, I know that. But so many strangers round." He turned and darted a swift glance behind him; then invited the three to advance their heads and whispered:

"We've decided that the only way to get the gang to show itself is to draw off all the guards but the sheriff. He's still lying low behind the packing-boxes above the corner. We begin to feel it's about time the cusses tried to rush the place."

"Played it off like you all were tired of sticking round when nothing was happening, without having a chance to get anything to eat or drink," said Hopkins admiringly.

"You *sabe* top-high," affirmed the deputy, winking slyly and slapping a coin on the bar.

"No more for me," protested Uncle Dick. "Could climb the steepest side of Pike's Peak without any spurs on, right now."

Hopkins and Peace also pleaded previous indulgence and left the deputy to drink alone while they returned to the street. There they found the same ominous quiet, the same little groups, mostly mounted, and the same air of general expectation that they might soon witness a reckless climax. Peace turned toward the jail, expecting his friends to fall in beside him. Hopkins demurred, saying—

"The less of us there is round the jail the better the chance for the trap to work."

"Reckon I won't go up again, Joe. I'm keeping an eye out for another chap," added Uncle Dick.

Peace, who was undecided whether to satisfy his curiosity alone, or to remain with his friends, gazed at Uncle Dick inquiringly.

"I'm meaning Sam Keene," whispered Uncle Dick.

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"Is he here?" gritted Peace, his left hand dropping to his belt.

"He was headed for here. Now, Joe, don't go off half-cocked. With one arm out of commission it won't do."

"I can shoot with my left," quietly replied Peace.

"Well, right here is as good a place to lay for him as anywhere," urged Uncle Dick.

"Maybe, but I'm thinking I'll walk a bit. I sha'n't go near the jail but I want to squint at some of those men on horseback. I'll be back soon."

Uncle Dick, when alone with Hopkins, explained:

"There was a feller up at the station who's acted powerful queer. I reckon he's a real bad one. Joe didn't cotton to him. Looking for him now."

"When they meet I hope Joe sees him first," said Hopkins.

THE double line entering and leaving the saloon worked the two into the horse-path, and now those in front of them hurriedly pressed back, as, with a jangling of spurs, a squad of men in the uniform of the United States Cavalry swept up. The mob cheered and Uncle Dick and Hopkins were jammed tight in the mass of humanity. As the riders drew abreast, Uncle Dick, his arms pinioned to his side by the crush, gasped inarticulately and then began yelling something at the top of his voice.

Hopkins supposed he was cheering the troopers and felt his own enthusiasm kindling to the point where he must give it vent, and he lustily joined in the outcry. With a desperate effort Uncle Dick finally freed one arm and hooked it about Hopkins' head and drew him down till he could bawl in his ear:

"Help me get out of here! Gorramighty! The man leading the soldiers is Chuckle-Luck, Gentleman Ralph's right-hand man! They ain't real soldiers! They're riding to clean out the jail!"

With a frantic bleat Hopkins hunched his broad shoulders, twisted, squirmed his way to the door of the saloon and grabbed the complacent deputy sheriff by the collar and began dragging him through the crowd, shouting, meanwhile:

"Dirty work! Get your men to the jail! Them soldiers are road-agents! Chuckle-Luck is leading them!"

By degrees this astounding intelligence was spread through the immediate neighborhood. At first men scoffed or became stupid through amazement, and valuable time was lost. Finally, however, a nucleus of belief was created.

A dozen irate men in a solid body, with Uncle Dick, Hopkins and the deputy in the lead, managed to get into the road, where their united voices scattered the news rapidly. As they ran toward the jail, others fell in behind them with guns drawn. Those who did not understand the situation believed mob rule was to anticipate the advertised hanging and zealously took their places in the procession.

A few men loitered some two hundred feet from the jail. These fell back as the cavalcade swept toward them. Rumblings of anger greeted the advent of the troops, the citizens fearing they were to be cheated of the double hanging. The Las Vegas sheriff behind his packing-box spat in disgust and laid his revolvers on the box, believing the military arm of the law was to usurp the prerogatives of the civil.

The mounted squad drew abreast of the Las Vegas officer, and the leader suddenly leaned from his saddle and fired, dropping the sheriff across the box with a bullet through his bronzed neck. Then, with the road clear, the horsemen raced furiously up to the jail, where two men were pressing their faces against the grated window.

Turkey Bill shouted in joyous relief as he recognized Chuckle-Luck. The second man ducked back, but not before Uncle Dick, now turning the corner, recognized Sam Keene.

To the astonishment of all, for even Uncle Dick and his followers had looked for nothing like what ensued, the mounted men, as one, threw up their carbines and, in racing by the window of the jail, fired through it. Then, with spurs driven home and firing a scattering volley to intimidate the citizens, they raced away, striking north toward the trail.

CIMARRON CITY remained stunned. Uncle Dick set a good example by emptying his guns after the bobbing figures, but even he reacted mechanically, his border sense telling him simply that bullets called for bullets.

The gathering crowd alternated between

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staring stupidly at the jail and after the receding cloud of dust. Those nearest the packing-box dumbly watched Hopkins and the young deputy lift the Las Vegas sheriff's long flowing mustaches from the pool of blood, while they ascertained that the bullet had barely missed the jugular vein.

"What's up?" cried a familiar voice, and Uncle Dick wheeled to behold Peace, bareheaded and wild of mien, a revolver gripped in his left hand.

"They was wearing soldiers' uniforms," mumbled Uncle Dick. "Pretty .nifty bunch!"

"But what does it mean?" demanded Peace. "The Army can't take prisoners from the civil authorities like this."

"The Army ain't. Make-believe soldiers done it. Chuckle-Luck headed 'em," wearily explained Uncle Dick.

Peace began to call for a posse. Hopkins turned the wounded sheriff over to the care of his deputies and informed Uncle Dick:

"They say that sometimes them cusses rig out as Mexicans, sometimes as herders. Reg'lar play-actors. But if Chuckle-Luck was leading them, where was Gentleman Ralph?"

"In the jail!" snorted Uncle Dick. "Mighty smart idee of your friends to set a trap for 'em to walk into."

Before Hopkins could digest this irony, two men came from the rear of the jail, running a zigzag course, leaping and bounding from side to side as if to dodge a volley, their faces revealing rage and fright. These were the jailer and his assistant. Both carried guns in their hands, and their wild gesticulations caused the crowd to break and duck for cover. Hopkins seized one and Uncle Dick the other and reduced them to a semblance of calmness.

Joe Peace's call for a posse was rapidly thinning out the crowd. Every man who had, or who could borrow, a horse was participating in the chase. Uncle Dick had no faith in the ability of the hastily organized posse to overhaul the outlaws, and he proposed to take his time in returning north. He remained with the jailer and his assistant for the present, staring at the grated window. Hopkins had surrendered to the enthusiasm of action and, on a white mule, was bringing up the tail of the long-drawn-out pursuit.

"S'pose we must go in and clean up," sighed the jailer. "—— shame, too! Turkey Bill was just at the p'int where he was willing to tell all he knew 'bout the gang. Then he seen the soldiers coming and shut up like a clam. If I'd had a minute more I'd had some secret information that would 'a' raised Ned with the whole gang. T'other cuss wouldn't say nothing."

"Reckon the gang knew Bill would tattle," remarked Uncle Dick. "I was close-by when they shut the mouth of one of their men who was about to blab."

"Think of 'em wearin' cavalry uniforms!" gasped the assistant. "Must 'a' got 'em from deserters."

"The clothes was new, I noticed. Quartermaster at Fort Lyon was robbed of some uniforms two months ago. No one dreamed it was the work of agents. We reckoned some trader got 'em to trade with the Injuns."

"Well, they looked like real soldiers to me," regretted the jailer. "When I see them coming I was all fussed up. I knew the boys had come in to have a good time and I hated to see Uncle Sam spile the party. Believing they was soldiers, me'n' my assistant went back to the kitchen, when, jumping Jerusalem! Thought the top of the jail was blowed plumb off! Ran into the strong room, and one look was enough for me. Both gents on the floor covered with blood! Even then we couldn't git the truth through our heads."

"Mr. Wooton, are the robbers dead?" asked Baptiste, who had approached unobserved.

"Somewhat," replied Uncle Dick, eying the trader malevolently.

"To think of their shooting Turkey Bill! He always seemed a nice feller," said the breed.

"Spiled a very pretty hanging," grunted the jailer. "When the crowd gits back they'll be techy in the temper and string up the first suspect they come across, 'specially any of Bill's friends."

"That dog never had no friends," warmly protested Baptiste. "I'm glad Bill is wiped out, if he was a outlaw. Of course a hanging would 'a' been better. Mr. Wooton knows how I feel against outlaws. I've got one buried up on Muddy Creek. Who's the other feller?"

"Maybe you can tell us," said Uncle Dick. "S'pose we all go and have a look."

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"I don't care enough to do that," demurred the trader. "A man killed in a fight is one thing to look at, and a man killed by a crowd is another."

"Still, I reckon you'd better look the stranger over for the sake of the record," gravely insisted the sheriff, sensing Wooton's antipathy to the breed and gravely motioning for Baptiste to precede him.

Baptiste did not relish the experience but, with a shrug of his shoulders, made the best of it and walked to the rear of the jail. The back door was open, testimony of the jailer's haste in quitting the building. The door to the strong room was also ajar. The jailer threw this back and pushed the breed over the threshold, saying:

"Look them over. Know the other feller?"

With a yell Baptiste crowded back and choked—

"Only one in there!"

Throwing him aside, Uncle Dick stepped into the room. Turkey Bill lay on the floor, shot to pieces, but Sam Keene was gone.

"By Hen! A dead man gets away!" faintly exclaimed Uncle Dick.

"But he couldn't! Dead men don't walk!" feebly argued the jailer.

"He was layin' face down on the floor," vacantly remarked the assistant.

Pulling himself together, Uncle Dick cast a glance about and snapped:

"He wasn't dead. Perhaps he wasn't wounded. See if there's any blood trail."

A casual examination of the back room was enough to prove that no such signs had been left by Keene in his flight. The mountaineer sharply continued:

"He's downright smart. He saw his men coming. He'd probably got word to them to do it and rub Bill out. Then he dropped and played 'possum while Bill was killed. He reckoned on getting away in the confusion, even if he had to wait till his body was fetched outdoors. Oh, he's a game and a very wise cuss! You two come in and, thinking both was dead, didn't bother to fasten no doors when you quit. Every one was busy shooting and chasing after the outlaws. All he had to to was to sneak away."

"My best gun's gone, belt and all!" wailed the jailer, pointing to an empty nail in the back room.

"Gorramighty! My hat an' rifle!" babbled the assistant. "Let's rustle out an' pick him up."

Uncle Dick smiled sourly.

"Save your wind," he advised. "A man smart enough to play this trick ain't traveling afoot."

"But who is he? I never heard of Sam Keene," fumed the jailer.

"No one else did till he tucked the name on to himself. You had Gentleman Ralph himself in your clutches and he's vamoosed. He had it rigged for his men to ride up and give him a chance to escape."

The jailer was speechless. The four walked through the back door and round to the front of the building. The street was practically deserted. It was Baptiste who broke the silence by shrilly exclaiming:

"Mr. Wooton, some one's taken my pony! He was hitched down there when I hurried up here to talk with you."

With a cry of rage Baptiste ran from them.

"That's how your prisoner rode away," gritted Uncle Dick.

"I never liked that half-breed. If a hoss must be took, I'm glad it's his," declared the jailer.

"Baptiste will make good hanging material before we're through with him," grimly prophesied Uncle Dick. "If he ain't a go-between for the gang, you can string me up."

With that he narrated some of his experiences at Muddy Creek when he had first met Sam Keene.

"At that time," he concluded, "I don't think the breed knew Keene to be the leader. Perhaps he didn't even suspect he was connected with the gang. Or again, he may have believed him to be one of the gang's lookouts, posted at the creek to pick up information and keep an eye on Mr. Baptiste. Well, I reckon I'll be plugging back to the Pass, now that all the agents seem going that way."

ARRIVING at the station, Uncle Dick was met by the Mexican who looked after the gate. The man was inarticulate for a minute because of the great news he had to impart. Uncle Dick leaped from his horse and shook the fellow violently; then released him, warning—

"Now, speak!"

"Road-agents—four!" choked the Mexican. "Come the woman to take!"

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"What?" roared Uncle Dick. "Them hounds back here again? They got Miss Isobel—and you're alive to tell it?"

"The woman gone was when come the road-agents," yelped the frightened Mexican.

"Steady, you mistake of natur'!" gritted Uncle Dick, "where did she go? Who did she go with? Get that upside down English of yours to working."

With much pantomime embellishing his reversed English, the Mexican finally managed to explain how Miss Isobel had gone riding with the Quail; how, shortly thereafter, the Arapahoes, including even the always-hungry Big Knife, had deserted the station in a body, with no word of explanation; how the south-bound stage had pulled in and reported a band of Kiowas lurking near the mouth of the pass; and how four white men, superbly mounted, had come like a whirlwind and held up the station, almost before the stage had passed up the grade.

"Which way did Miss Isobel and the Quail ride?" asked Uncle Dick.

The Mexican pointed down the north slope. The mountaineer groaned as he believed he had solved the mystery. The girl had gone riding to forget she was lonesome. The Quail had dutifully followed, after telling her people to come after her if she and the girl did not return promptly. Satanta, still smarting over Wooton's discovery of his conference with some of the northern chiefs, had brought his band to the mouth of the pass and had stolen the girl.

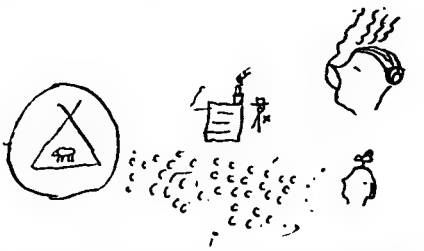
That her disappearance was not due to the outlaws, was evidenced by their bold visit to the station after the girl had gone away. That the bandits had spied on the station to the extent of outwitting the sharp eyes of the Arapahoes, and had known the master and Joe Peace were absent, was also obvious.

"All comes of leaving Injuns on guard when there's a chance for them to stuff their hides with white men's grub," he groaned. "Well, there's a chance that Yellow Bear may overtake the kidnappers, but, in the fight that's sure to follow, only the good Lord knows what'll happen to her."

He hurried into the station and hurriedly looked over the premises. His room had been ransacked. A small hair-covered trunk was upturned on the floor and a small stock of gold was missing.

"Pocketed the gold through habit," he mused, studying the disorder. "But they didn't come just for that. They was after the girl, to make her tell where she found the nuggets."

He next visited the girl's room. It had not held the outlaws' attention, once they learned she was gone. The general appearance of tidiness was not disturbed. He was turning to go, when his gaze caught a new decoration on the little rustic shelf by the door. It was picture-writing drawn on a piece of paper with the end of a charred stick. It was characteristically Indian in execution, and he knew the Quail must have been the artist. He took it down and examined it carefully.



His fear gave way to thanksgiving as he readily interpreted it to read:

The Medicine-Woman—as indicated by the wavy, mystic lines above her head—and the Quail—shown by the smaller figure below—had taken horses and gone to Arapaho teepees. The many hoof-marks meant the two were accompanied by Yellow Bear and his men. The crudely drawn quadruped on the teepee signified a bear, or Yellow Bear's camp. To make doubly sure he should understand, she had added the symbolic circle around the teepee, to be interpreted as a cloud, or "Blue Cloud People"—Arapahoes. What was more, the camp lay beyond the trading-store of Baptiste on Muddy Creek, as shown by the shack with its chimney. The figure of a man wearing a hat—a white man with a cross displayed at his side, together with the symbol for the Cheyennes—indicated one of both white and Cheyenne blood.

"But why the —— didn't Miss Isobel leave me a note if she knew where she was going? She didn't know. She thought she was going for a ride. Yet the Quail knew and had time to make this picter-writing. Something happened to make the Quail feel afraid to stay here, even with her people on guard. Injun-like, she said nothing to the girl, but made this writing

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and asked the girl to go riding, tipped off Yellow Bear to follow them and then bolted. Now what could have scared her into doing that?"

He called the Mexican and cross-examined him as to the behavior of the Arapahoes. They had had no liquor, the Mexican vowed. They had kept scouts out on both sides of the road. After the two women had ridden down the road, they had quietly mounted their ponies and followed, without a word of explanation.

Greatly relieved but none the less puzzled, Uncle Dick entered the cook-house and hurriedly ate a hearty meal. He felt but little concern for the girl's safety, now that he believed Yellow Bear and his braves were guarding her. Satanta and his Kiowas would hardly dare attempt stealing her unless they could do so stealthily.

The precipitate flight of the Arapahoes proved that the Quail and her people feared something and were not to be taken by surprize. Perhaps they had learned of the road-agents' plans to raid the station, and did not care to give battle while cooped up in the pass. How they could have gained this information was another problem.

Finishing his meal, Uncle Dick wrote a message and left it with the Mexican to give to Joe Peace, should the latter show up. Then, procuring a fresh horse from the corral, he started on the trail of the Arapahoes.

CHAPTER IX

THE MEDICINE OF THE ARAPAHOES

IF ANY of the road-agent band lurked in the by-trails up the slopes, they gave no hostile sign as Uncle Dick rode down the pass. He had seen nothing of the Cimarron posse nor of Joe Peace and deduced that the pursuit of the bogus soldiers had not struck into the south slope of the pass, but had led to one side into the hills. This would account for the fact that at least twelve of the highwaymen had not participated in the station-house raid, but the knowledge satisfied him none.

Four men had dared to come after the girl in broad daylight. This fact mocked his vigilance and proved that the outlaws kept close tabs on his coming and going. Another example of the band's excellent system of espionage was demonstrated by its quick knowledge of Turkey Bill's and Keene's predicament. Their ability to learn Turkey Bill's inclination to betray gang secrets and their prompt brutality in closing his lips was proof positive that spies were scattered all along the old trail.

The written message from Gentleman Ralph directing him to put the girl on One-Eyed Cassidy's coach at first bothered Uncle Dick's direct process of thinking. If Keene were Gentleman Ralph, how could he have been at the station quarreling with Joe Peace and at the same time be down the south slope holding up Cassidy and making him his messenger? He now realized however, that it was unnecessary for the leader to deliver the message in person to the stage-driver. Any one of his men could have assumed the rôle.

What remained entirely unexplicable, however, was the memory of the two masked horsemen exchanging shots in the toll-road, while the mountaineer looked on from the Devil's Elbow. The scene at the Happy Fortune saloon also recurred to bother him. The stranger, Chuckle-Luck, had induced Jack Free to commit murder. Shorty, the grotesque bartender, had been incited by the same agency to throw his deadly knife at the toll-gate keeper. Chuckle-Luck must have seen him before he entered and recognized him.

That was not very puzzling, but what friendly hand had shot out the lights and stopped Shorty's knife? An explanation might be found in the theory that a patron had sought to open an avenue of escape from flying bullets and had had no thought of benefiting the mountaineer. Yet this line of reasoning did not satisfy Uncle Dick. A steady hand and a cool brain had been behind the three shots.

Wearying of the riddle, Uncle Dick dismissed it and pressed on to Muddy Creek. He purposed calling there before proceeding to the Arapaho camp. The latter was located, according to the picture-writing, in about the same spot where Satanta had received certain chiefs at night.

It was nearing sunset when Wooton came to the cottonwoods behind Baptiste's store. Dismounting, he warily approached the creek. There was no sign of life about the store. Keene's empty shack across the stream stood with door half open and the rag of a blanket still hanging across the window. Convinced that the breed had

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not yet returned, the mountaineer led his horse through the timber and turned him loose to graze. Next he hurried downstream to the grave of Deland, Miss Isobel's uncle. The grave had not been disturbed and Uncle Dick smiled grimly as he recalled Baptiste's gruesome assertion that he would exhume the body and collect the reward.

"He wouldn't dare uncover it for fifty thousand dollars," he mused. "That is, not unless Gentleman Ralph gave the order."

Splashing across the stream, he entered Keene's shack. The place had been stripped. As Uncle Dick gazed about the bare walls and shelves, he wondered where the stock of liquor had been kept. Not on the floor, improvised from packing-box material, for there were no telltale circles to indicate where jugs or kegs had stood. And again, the floor was of flimsy construction, the weight of the trade goods having come on the stout shelves.

More from curiosity than because it had to do with his errand, Uncle Dick examined the floor. Beside the stone fireplace he found a trap-door and, throwing it back, saw that it opened into a small cellar or pit. Tearing a splinter from a box-cover, he lighted it and dropped below. A crude flooring of saplings marked where the trade liquor had been stored. The light from his torch revealed nothing but this and the earthen walls of the pit.

He was about to quit the hole when instinct impelled him to throw the saplings aside. At first, only the damp soil rewarded his efforts, but as he persevered and cleaned them away to the wall, he came to a box-cover. Removing this, he looked into a box sunk in the dirt. Removing a section of buffalo-hide, he found several interesting exhibits. One was the uniform of a United States cavalryman. Another was the coarse homespun clothing of an immigrant. In a third package was the gaudy apparel of a Mexican dandy.

"Miss Isobel 'lowed he seemed to be quite a few men all chucked into one," he mused. "Reckon this explains how he used to do it."

REPLACING the hide, the cover and the saplings, he crawled up through the opening. His horse whinnied outside. Peeping from the window, he saw his animal was facing the cottonwoods, his ears pricked forward.

Slipping from the shack, he crossed the stream and seated himself before Baptiste's door, his rifle across his knees. He remained thus for several minutes, when a slight noise at the end of the store and on his right caused him to shift the position of his rifle to cover that point of approach. In a moment Baptiste's dark face peered around the corner.

"You, is it?" called out Uncle Dick.

"Mr. Wooton, you didn't ought to scare honest folks like that," complained the breed as he advanced.

"My horse oughter told you I was here," said Uncle Dick.

"It told me some one was here but you were out of sight. I didn't know——"

He stopped and glanced at the mountaineer's wet boots and then looked across to the shack.

"Uh-huh," affirmatively grunted Uncle Dick in response to the silent query. "Went across to make sure no one could pot me while I waited for you to show up. Shack is cleaned out, I see."

"I took the liquor. You took the trade goods," reminded Baptiste thoughtfully. "I think I shall tear it down. It makes too good a cover for any one wanting to hide up and shoot me."

"Noticed you hadn't dug up your dead robber yet."

Baptiste frowned.

"Killing that fellow at Cimarron, Mr. Wooton, seems to have took the edge off the market," he sorrowfully confessed. Then hopefully: "But the price will go up again after a few more coaches has been robbed."

"That's the talk. Never lose heart," encouraged Uncle Dick. "You went with the posse?"

"I chased after it after I'd bought me a horse, but couldn't get in sight of it. That feller taking my horse made my trip pretty expensive. I kept going on and entered the pass, thinking the chase must 'a' gone that way. But when I reached your station a Mexican man said no horsemen had gone through, that you'd been there and gone. So I reckon you're the one who has the news."

"Ain't seen hide nor hair of 'em. Chase must 'a' led led off to one side. Never entered the pass at all."

"I see," murmured the breed, his eyes

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questioning. "Then what are you doing down here?"

"I'm reckoning there's a secret path that they use when they don't fancy to pay toll or be seen. Thought I'd come down this way and look about," Uncle Dick explained.

"I do hope they'll be driven out the country, Mr. Wooton. The way they act is just spoiling my trade. I've been looking for Satanta and some of his Kiowas to come in and trade, but so much riding and shooting scares them. Ain't traded a single robe in weeks. If things would quiet down, a man might make a living."

"Too bad. I'm mighty sorry for you, Baptiste," condoled Uncled Dick. "But you'd better look out, or old Satanta will be raising your hair."

"My Injun blood is medicine against that," said Baptiste with a shrug of his shoulders. "But I'm forgetting myself, Mr. Wooton. We don't have to stick out here. How would a little drink strike you?"

"It would be comforting," acknowledged Uncle Dick, rising.

The breed reached to the top of the door and removed the end of a rawhide thong which was noosed round a nail and then led through a hole to the interior of the store.

"Never noticed that contraption before," remarked Uncle Dick as Baptiste proceeded to unlock the door.

"A little trap of mine to stop folks trying to rob the store while I'm gone," chuckled the breed.

As he threw the door back, the mountaineer jumped aside, for the muzzle of a musket, mounted on forked saplings, gaped ominously over the threshold.

"It can't do no harm now," assured Baptiste, picking up the gun and coiling the rawhide. "It's filled with slugs. Any one opening the door while the line is fast to the nail will git a bellyful. One night when I come back from a trip I found a Cheyenne in the doorway. I'm half Cheyenne but I didn't care to make any presents to his folks, so I buried him down the creek."

"You've got a fine start toward a personal graveyard," said the mountaineer.

"I was very sorry, but folks didn't ought to go nosing round," sighed the breed as he hunted out a jug and a glass, reserving a dipper for himself.

Uncle Dick waited until his host had drunk heavily; then tasted the liquor, found it fair and swallowed it. The breed rubbed his stomach appreciatively. The drink seemed to brighten him amazingly and he insisted that Uncle Dick remain all night.

"That's neighborly of you," said Uncle Dick, "but I don't know as I can. I ought to be getting back to the station. No knowing how many that Mexican has let go through scot-free. He'll never collect from his own tribe if he's on the gate alone. Besides him there's only the cook and a couple of boys."

"And the Quail," supplemented Baptiste.

"Of course, the Quail," said Uncle Dick, wondering just how much Baptiste had learned while at the station.

"Anyway, you'll eat with me?"

"We can't drink all the time," was the acceptance.

"Now that is fine, Mr. Wooton. Maybe you'll change your mind and stay the night. I know you ain't liked me very much, but if you get better acquainted you'll find me a man of my word. I'll be rustling some grub while you see to your horse. You'd better picket him up the creek where the feed's better."

UNCLE DICK secured his horse and rode up-stream, but instead of grazing improving, it grew worse.

"Now why did that lummox tell me the grass was better up here," he wrathfully exclaimed as he surveyed the stony ground. "Injuns could never start on the war-path if the grass never got thicker'n higher'n this.

"Hello! Jumping Christmas!"

The ejaculation was wrung from him as he happened to glance down the creek and, at some distance, behold a tall pillar of smoke piling into the heavens.

With an oath he jerked his horse about, pulled his gun and rode at a gallop along the creek. Sweeping around the store, he came upon Baptiste busily feeding a bonfire.

"Kick it to pieces! Hump yourself!" he yelled, discharging a bullet between the trader's feet and causing him to jump wildly.

"Why, Mr. Wooton——"

The gun banged again and Uncle Dick roared:

"Kick that fire to pieces. Quick!"

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The second shot had grazed the breed's leg and he worked frenziedly in tearing the mess apart.

"Now, what did you mean by that partic'lar trick?" fiercely demanded Uncle Dick, his revolver still leveled at the perspiring and thoroughly frightened trader.

"Why, Mr. Wooton! I was just burning up waste stuff, same's I always do when the store gets cluttered," wailed Baptiste. "I had it piled up before I went to Cimarron. I remembered about it when supper was cooking, so I touched it off."

Uncle Dick spurred his horse through the smoldering debris and, whirling about grimly, inquired:

"Piled up green grass, eh? You black-hearted liar! Always a man of your word, eh? Dod rot you, I ought to rub you out just for luck! Who was you signaling to?"

"But I wa'n't signaling to no one," groaned Baptiste.

He presented a curious spectacle, his limbs twisting and writhing, but his features remaining unmoved.

"Why, Mr. Wooton, just look round you. See them! One, two, three burned spots where I've burned rubbish. I always do it."

"Not signaling? And yet there's green grass in that litter. Why did you pile on green grass if not to make a signal? Why did you send me up to that stone-heap if it wasn't to give you a chance to light this mess?"

"You don't understand me, Mr. Wooton," sighed Baptiste. "You see something bad when everything is all right. In dragging the stuff together some grass got mixed in. It always does. As for the feeding-grounds, you didn't go far enough. Just a few rods beyond that bare spot and the grass is good."

"I reckon you're lying to me," was the stern rejoinder. "And I won't eat any of your grub. If that smoke brings any one on my trail, my first job will be hunt you down and riddle your miserable carcass."

With this warning Uncle Dick dismounted and procured his rifle from beside the door, climbed into the saddle and rode through the creek, his head half-turned all the time that he might keep an eye on the trader. Baptiste stood by the ruins of the fire, staring after his late guest but making no offensive move.

"—— snake! He'd pot me if he had a chance and had the nerve to try it," growled the mountaineer as his horse dipped into a hollow and out of sight of the store.

The more his thoughts dwelt on the smoke the more he was convinced that it had been made as a signal. Whether he had interrupted it in time, or whether it had conveyed its full message, he had no way of knowing. If one column served the breed's purpose, the message had certainly been delivered, for the towering shaft must have been discernible for many miles.

Plains life had early taught Uncle Dick never to leave a menace dogging his tracks. If the smoke had been a signal, then it must have been made to call some one to the vicinity of the store, where Baptiste would be ready to point out the victim's trail. Uncle Dick reined in and pondered the situation carefully. He must sleep out-doors. So long as he must camp, he felt it would be wise to do so at once and spend a little time in examining his back-trail.

Finding a snug spot among the rocks, heavily carpeted with dry moss, he picketed his horse and spread a blanket. Taking food from a saddle-bag, he ate; then lighted his pipe and smoked until the near-by boulders were blurred from view by the night.

Taking his rifle, he traveled in a half-circle until he was back at the creek at a point considerably above the store. He did not cross the stream but worked down until he stood behind Keene's shack. There was a light shining from the store, but, although he waited for a shape to show at the window, he could discern no signs of the trader. Stealing to the front of the shack, he found the door as he had left it, partly open, and, trusting to the darkness to conceal his movements, he glided inside.

TAKING a position by the window where the fragment of a blanket still half-masked the opening, he patiently waited. Some thirty minutes passed before he was rewarded; then a shrill birdlike call up the creek brought him to attention. He looked for Baptiste to appear in his doorway, but nothing moved within the store. The call was answered. From a difference in timbre Uncle Dick knew it was not a repetition.

Soon he heard the sound of voices up the creek. He started and thrilled with joy and softly thrust the muzzle of his rifle through the window as he caught the high-pitched, wailing intonation of Gentleman

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Ralph. It was impossible to make out any object along the creek, but when the newcomers should pass within the light shining from the store window he would have something to say.

Now the low voice of the trader was to be distinguished. The tone was very humble and smacking of a hidden fear.

"But——you!" whined Gentleman Ralph. "Why didn't you do for him instead of calling me down here?"

"Oh, sir, I didn't reckon on troubling you," meekly protested the trader. "I was reckoning on your sending one of the boys. I didn't know what to do. He was going to eat with me and perhaps stay all night, but I wasn't sure he'd stay and he was suspicious of every move I made.

"Why, sir, if just by chance my hand dropped toward my belt he'd drop a hand on a gun. And when we come to drink he waited for me to drink, just like he was afraid I'd put poison in his liquor. I didn't want to make any mistake, on account of you and the boys, let alone not wanting to lose my life. If I'd known for sure he'd stay all night I wouldn't 'a' sent up the smoke but just waited till he slept. That would 'a' been easy."

"It usually is when a man's asleep," answered Gentleman Ralph. "You idiot, you let him clear out after he'd said he was suspicious about the smoke?"

"He did carry on about it but I don't think he really believed it meant anything. If he'd been sure I reckon I'd be dead by this time."

"You've played right into his hands," shrilly fumed the bandit-leader.

"But what was I to do?" groaned Baptiste. "How was I to know he'd act so about the smoke? I showed him the burnt spots where I've made signals to you before. I think now he's quite satisfied I was burning up odds and ends."

"You bungled it, —— you!" raged the high-pitched voice. "You knew what I wanted. I've told you enough times since he was here last. You had no business to send up that smoke when you had him all to yourself. Now that I'm here, how am I to pick up his trail and do work you're paid for doing?"

"He crossed the creek and rode toward the Purgatory. He can be rounded up by some of the boys first thing in the morning easy," eagerly propitiated Baptiste.

"I'm here alone. The men are in hiding. I was the only one to come and you've called me here on a fool's errand and, what's worse, have probably put the old fool on his guard against another trick I have under way and must go through with. You ought to lose both ears."

There was a terrible menace in the sing-song voice, as if some implacable machine were speaking. The breed began to betray a hideous fear, and, although his figure was not to be made out, Uncle Dick could picture the terror in Baptiste's soul as he fell to vowing his loyalty, to recounting past coups for the good of the outlaw gang.

"Shut up!" whimpered Gentleman Ralph. "You've been well paid for all you've done. You never took any chances. You got your money easy. The only time you could have done a real service was a few hours ago, and you bungled your chance. I won't have such men serving me."

"Listen," begged the breed. "I'll take up his trail in the morning. I'll ride till I find him. When I see him, I'll wave my hand and ride right up to him and—and I'll do for him in his tracks. I swear I will!"

The two were now standing at the end of the store near the door. Did they pass the door and into the light of the window, Uncle Dick would be in position to collect the reward offered for Gentleman Ralph. As it was, he could vaguely make out their shapes, but he could not tell which was which.

The breed resumed pleading:

"If I don't get him tomorrow you can have my ears, and my head. Come in and have a drink."

"I think I'll give you this one chance. But no more bungling. If you don't get him and he don't get you, keep right on going. Don't come back!"

"Yes, sir! And I'll be sure to fix the old hound," cried the breed ferociously. "And what about a drink?"

"Not in there," was the whining refusal. "You can bring it out here."

"Yes, sir. In just a second!" cried the breed approaching and fumbling at the door.

UNCLE DICK dropped to one knee and sighted at the figure remaining at the end of the store. He would fire when the door opened for Baptiste to enter and the light poured out.

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Then the terrible thing happened. As the door swung inward there came a loud explosion and something belched flame and smoke across the threshold. Dazed for a moment, Uncle Dick forgot to shoot. He was recalled to his senses by an ear-splitting scream from the bandit-leader. Then the pitiless words:

"You —— traitor! Take that!"

There followed the *bang-bang* of a heavy revolver.

The soft scurrying of footsteps along the bank of the creek was Uncle Dick's only guide as he sprang to the door and began firing. From the darkness the outlaw's weapon spat back at him.

Gliding behind the shack, Uncle Dick reloaded, expecting every instant to find the bandit upon him. Not until some moments had elapsed did he manage to recover his composure and reconstruct the tragedy he had just witnessed.

It was all very simple. Baptiste had left the store to meet one of the outlaws sent to answer the signal. As was his custom he had arranged his death-trap and locked the door before setting forth up the creek. The meeting of Gentleman Ralph, himself, had surprized and unnerved the breed, so great was his fear of the man with a woman's voice. The bandit's anger over Baptiste's failure to murder Uncle Dick on the spot had further fed the breed's terror. Doubtless he knew the bandit never made idle threats. He had sensed an evil fate in the man's reproaches and had actually felt his life trembling in the balance.

Then followed the relenting and the expressed willingness to take a drink. Feeling he had been saved from the grave and only thinking to confirm the outlaw's less irascible mood, Baptiste had for the first time in his life forgotten to remove the rawhide thong from the nail before pushing in the door. When he had thrown back the door and stepped on the threshold he had received the terrible volley in his chest.

Gentleman Ralph, ignorant of what had happened and taking it for granted he was being led into an ambush, had fired two shots into the mangled body before fleeing.

"Dot-rot it!" exploded Uncle Dick, hurrying back to the front of the shack. "My shots from over here must 'a' made him believe all the more that he was being waylaid. Here I be sneaking round like a scared rabbit, as if he might pounce on me in the dark. I'll bet a jug he's hoofing it like sin to get out of this neighborhood, reckoning a whole posse is after him. Huh! Reckon I'll look about a bit."

Making a detour so as to across the creek below the cabin, he forded and swung upstream until he stood behind the store. Waiting a bit, he advanced to the rear of the building and looked through the small window. The store was empty. The musket had kicked loose from its supporting saplings and lay on the floor.

Sprawled out on his back, half over the threshold, was Baptiste, his body shattered by the handful of heavy slugs. Uncle Dick was strongly tempted to enter the place and search it for some fresh clues to the membership of the gang. To do so was to invite detection. He weighed the chances thoughtfully; then decided:

"Reckon I won't be more'n a dozen kinds of a fool. I can search this place on my return from the Arapaho village. Lordy, but that chap's voice gets on my nerves! It's like a nail scratching across a piece of glass. Baptiste, you was a miserable cuss, but your boss is a heap worse."

With this farewell to the dead trader he retraced his steps across the creek and returned to his horse and blanket in time to secure several hours of sleep before sunrise.

MAKING for the site of Satanta's camp, the mountaineer sighted a smoke soon after sunrise. Rendered cautious by his recent experiences and inclined to suspect a trap or a surprize under the most plausible exteriors, he left his horse in order to scout ahead on foot.

What warriors were astir were huddled in their blankets around several small fires, intend on preparing their morning meal. One teepee bore a device which Uncle Dick believe to be that of a bear, the mark of Yellow Bear. Near this was a smaller teepee, and, as Uncle Dick watched, two figures emerged from it and mounted ponies. Uncle Dick hurried back to his horse, for there was no mistaking the two; they were women and one was white.

He paused to tighten a saddle-girth and his horse threw up his head. The mountaineer caught him by the nose just in time to suppress a whinny. His action had been instinctive, as he was perfectly willing his horse should betray his presence to his friends, but it was not the ponies in the

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Indian camp that had attracted the attention of Uncle Dick's mount.

Noting the pricked ears and eager gaze, Uncle Dick turned his head and was surprized to behold one of the station animals passing through the rock débris some distance to his left. A man was leading the animal but, as he wore a blanket Indian-fashion, he was not to be recognized.

The newcomer halted and stealthily studied the camp from behind a boulder; then he took something from his belt and examined it. His next move was to swing into the saddle and start openly for the teepees.

Uncle Dick also advanced, only riding more slowly. On leaving the last of the scattered rocks, he saw that the two women were approaching the newcomer's course at right angles. Uncle Dick now had no difficulty in recognizing the features of Miss Isobel and the Quail.

Suddenly the Quail discovered the stranger, seized the bridle of the girl's horse and came to a halt. Then, whirling the two animals about, she rode for the camp and as she rode she tore off her blanket and repeatedly raised it above her head with her right hand and swung it toward the ground, the Arapaho signal for "enemy."

The Indians, upon seeing the signal, sprang from their fires, flung themselves on to their ponies and raced madly to meet them.

All this time the stranger continued to advance, only as the women retreated he called out something. The onrushing Arapahoes divided to let the two women through and began firing at the stranger. The latter came to a halt and turned to gallop away. He had gone only a few rods, however, when Uncle Dick saw him slump forward, slip sidewise and crash to the ground, one foot held fast in the stirrup. The horse stopped and turned his head to learn what had happened, and, before Uncle Dick could gain the spot, the Indians had milled about the silent figure, yelling like demons, leaning low from the saddle and firing into the corpse.

With a roar of rage Uncle Dick bore down on the group. Yellow Bear recognized him and interpreted his displeasure and called on his warriors to desist from mauling the dead man.

"What do you mean by shooting a man like that and then riddling his body like you were Kiowas?" cried Uncle Dick.

"He is a bad man. He was after the medicine-woman," informed Yellow Bear.

"How do you know that?" asked Uncle Dick.

"The Quail gave the sign for an enemy. We saw him riding after the two women. He tried to get away when we came up. We brought the medicine-woman here to keep her safe until Cut-Hand came."

Uncle Dick dismounted, released the dead man's imprisoned foot and pulled the blanket away from his head.

"Great Hen!" he barked. "It's one of my Mexicans—the one who tends gate!" Then in Arapaho: "The Blue-Cloud people are like foolish children. They see a man coming to their camp and they kill him."

The Indians now recognized the slain man as the Mexican at the station and were greatly taken back at their error. Yellow Bear could only defend the killing by repeating:

"The Quail gave the sign for an enemy. We believed other white men were hiding among the rocks—that they came after the medicine-woman."

"The poor devil was bringing some word to Miss Isobel," groaned Uncle Dick, bending and removing a paper from the Mexican's hand.

The Indians remained mounted, their gaze averted from their old friend. The mountaineer noticed the paper was addressed to Miss Isobel. Opening it, he was astounded to read:

> Have the Quail bring you back to the station at once. Tell the Quail not to bring her people along. Can't feed them. No danger now. I will try to meet you near the mouth of the pass.
>
> UNCLE DICK WOOTON.

"By gumfrey! If that ain't a ring-snorter!" choked Uncle Dick, glaring at the forged message. "No danger, eh? And the Injuns ain't wanted!"

Turning to the silent, uneasy circle of braves he sternly announced:

"Perhaps my brothers did right in shooting this man. The talking paper shows some one planned to steal the medicine-woman away from the Arapahoes."

Yellow Bear threw back his head, his eyes glittering, and sounded the death-cry. Uncle Dick reread the message and loudly complained in English:

"Of all the dunder-head luck! The Mexican's wiped out and can't tell me a

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thing. He can't read. He may have acted honest in fetching this writing, but if he was alive he could tell who give it to him. Hard to think he'd turn against me after all the years I've fed him."

Yellow Bear dropped from his pony, stooped over the dead man, touched the leather belt and gazed inquiringly up into the mountain man's worried face. The chief's keen gaze had detected a bit of white showing above the edge of the dead man's belt.

Uncle Dick promptly investigated and found a second message. It was addressed to Uncle Dick Wooton and it read:

UNCLE DICK:

Come to me. I'm a prisoner at a trading-store. An Indian who speaks English as well as any white man is on guard. Small creek runs by the store. Across the creek is an empty cabin. Masked men captured me in the pass and brought me here. Come at once, as they plan to move me to some other place. The Mexican followed us and is hiding outside the window. He will get this to you, he says.

ISOBEL DELAND.

"Two ——!" snarled Uncle Dick, holding the messages together and noting that they were written by the same hand. "That's why the skunk— But no, maybe he's innocent.

"He ain't noways to blame for what's writ in these, unless he knew all the time that there was crooked work going on. But that's why he stopped and looked 'em over —wanted to make sure he didn't have 'em mixed. Here's a small cross marked on the girl's message. If I only could have talked with him!"

"Cut-Hand's man carries more talking-papers?" asked Yellow Bear, staring curiously at the body.

"Don't see as how he had any call to be outfitted with more writings," mumbled Uncle Dick in English. "Reckon it's a good plan to make sure, though."

He rapidly searched the Mexican. Although he found no more messages, he did find several double eagles which had never come from the station strong box. A scratch along the edge of each told him they had come from the box of marked coins intrusted to Turkey Bill. They established the dead man's guilt beyond all question, for the sum was entirely too large for him to have earned honestly.

"The Arapahoes will bury him. Do not scalp him," he directed.

A CLEAR voice calling his name aroused him from his painful meditations. Miss Isobel, a pistol-shot away, was restrained from approaching nearer by the hand of the Quail holding her pony.

"Why don't you answer, Uncle Dick? Who is it? Is he badly hurt? Why did they do it?" she cried.

"Be with you in a minute. He ain't suffering any," he shouted back. Then to the Quail: "Take the medicine-woman back to the teepee."

The Quail turned the girl's pony and despite her remonstrance removed her from the scene. Under Uncle Dick's directions the Indians wrapped the Mexican in his blanket, placed him across his horse and conveyed him among the rocks, where a shallow grave was hastily made in the hard soil and supplemented by a mound of stones. Crooked Arm—now known as the Man-Who-Strikes-Alone, because of his coup in the cañon—displayed a tendency to linger behind the burial party. Glimpsing Big Knife loitering on the edge of the circle, Uncle Dick imposed on him the responsibility of guarding the grave against molestation.

Then, riding beside Yellow Bear, he briefly related the nature of the two messages.

"Does Cut-Hand's medicine tell him who sent the talking papers by the *nihanataxche* —yellow-hide?" asked the chief.

"Not yet," coldly retorted Uncle Dick. "If the Arapahoes had not been so fast to kill him I should have learned everything."

"Then the Arapaho tribal medicine shall tell us," confidently said the chief. "There are no secrets from the Turtle, the Corn and the Flat Pipe."

"That will be clever of them," was the morose reply but, being given in English, the chief missed the irony. "Some one planned to have the medicine-woman ride back with the Quail. They were to be captured near the mouth of the pass. It was also planned for the yellow hide to find me and give me a paper that would send me to Baptiste's store, where I should ride into an ambush and be killed."

"Baptiste is bad. He did it," declared the chief.

"Not unless they can write talking papers in the spirit land," demurred Uncle Dick. He tersely explained how the trader had

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passed on. Then he brightened and added: "But there is a way to find out. One of the Arapahoes knows enough of the truth to set us right. I will talk with the Quail."

"The Quail has not said why we brought the medicine-woman here," complained the chief.

"She has waited to tell me," was the complacent answer.

Uncle Dick rode furiously down to the camp, the Indians streaming out behind him.

Isobel ran from the teepee, her face revealing the shock her nerves had sustained because of the tragedy. Throwing her arms about her protector's neck, she whispered:

"Who was the man? Why was he killed? I know he was killed."

"Then I won't lie any more. He was bad all through. He planned to do you mischief. Good riddance to an evil dog! Don't bother your pretty head about him. Your troubles are about over."

"You won't tell me anything more?"

"I'll tell you everything I know when we get back to the station," he evaded. "I'm in a hurry to learn certain facts first. I've been rambling round quite promisc'us since I said good-by to you on top of Raton."

"It was very lonely after you and Mr. Peace both went away," she sighed. "When the Quail asked me to go riding I was glad to do so. But when we got down the pass and I began to think we were going too far, all her people came clattering after us and, without a word, they brought me here. The Quail has been very good to me, but she mustn't treat me like a child. She wouldn't give me any reason whatever for bringing me here."

"She wouldn't tell Yellow Bear, either," soothed Uncle Dick with a whimsical smile. "Injuns are close-mouthed at times. Now you just step back and let me talk to her alone. She'll tell me all about it. See she's waiting to let loose."

The girl retired and the Quail advanced until she and Uncle Dick stood beyond earshot of the curious warriors.

"Cut-Hand's ears are open," Uncle Dick gravely prompted as the woman remained silent.

"Bime-by, mebbe," replied the Quail.

"Talk your own tongue," commanded Uncle Dick, knowing that the woman's resort to her meager English betokened a stubbornness of spirit. "Why did you bring the white girl here?"

The Quail's flat face was extremely stupid in expression as she stared into the mountaineer's domineering eyes and replied in English—

"Good here."

Deeply exasperated but forcing himself to an appearance of composure, Uncle Dick coaxed:

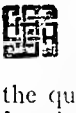
"The Quail has called Cut-Hand friend ever since she first saw him in the village of her people. She was very small—so high. She ran to him for presents when he came. She has worked in the mountain-lodge since she grew up to be a woman. Why did she bring the white girl here?"

"Tellum bime-by, mebbe."

"You knew the white girl was in danger? What was the danger?" he sternly insisted.

"Tellum bime-by. Sometime, mebbe." Then, pointing in the direction of the pass, she added: "Up there, —— bad."

With that she waddled back to the girl, leaving Uncle Dick chewing his lips in helpless anger and conscious that Yellow Bear's grave features masked mocking thoughts.



TO COMPEL the Quail to speak, once she had made up her stolid mind to remain silent, was out of the question. The most ingenious devices for physical torture could not have elicited a word from her. Nor was this from sheer stubbornness of spirit, as he well knew. His knowledge of the Indian character permitted him to appreciate that there were some points which baffled the woman's understanding. Until she could clear these up to her satisfaction she would divulge nothing. He also knew she never would have brought the girl to the lowlands unless the exigence had been great. After he and Peace had departed south she had discovered or suspected some vital menace at the station.

"It was that Mexican," soliloquized Uncle Dick. "She learned something that made her afraid of him—something she only partly understood. It was enough to send her down here where her people would have elbow-room for a fight. She was skeered of the Mexican when she quit the station. That's why she give the enemy sign the minute she clamped her eyes on him. But she won't talk till she gets good and ready—not even if I used blasting-powder."

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Yellow Bear came forward and pleasantly inquired—

"Cut-Hand knows all now?"

"Like ——!" Then courteously: "He waits for the Quail's medicine to grow stronger. We will have a talk about it after we have eaten."

"My young men say they find signs of the Kiowas near here. They say the White Bear's warriors are on the Purgatory."

"Settainte is in no hurry to get his presents from Colonel Leavenworth. He better look sharply or he'll hear the Long Knives' bugle playing the 'charge'!"

"The Arapahoes will go to Medicine Lodge and sign the treaty. The Kiowas brought us evil words, but we would not listen to them," solemnly declared the chief.

Uncle Dick remembered his difficulty in intruding on the conference between Satanta and the Arapahoes and smothered a grim smile.

"The medicine of the Stone Turtle watches over the Blue-Cloud people. War with the whites would wipe out the tribe."

Somewhat shamefaced, Uncle Dick rejoined the girl, who eagerly asked—

"What did the Quail tell you?"

"Stone walls ain't nothing alongside of a Injun's way of keeping the mouth shut," he ruefully confessed. "She told me nothing except it was better for you to be down here for a spell—or till I go back."

"We can return now?" she anxiously asked. "These people are very kind, but I don't like living in a skin tent."

"We'll start right after we've had something to eat," he promised.

He hastened to the circle of warriors in order to arrange for the return trip, informing Yellow Bear of his plan to start for the station almost immediately. To his amazement the chief heard him coldly and shook his head, saying:

"Another sleep. Then we go."

"You mean you won't go with me today?" indignantly demanded Uncle Dick.

"One more sleep. Then we will go."

"Take your sleep and be ——! The medicine-woman and I start today."

"Cut-Hand's pony is very tired."

"My pony hasn't sweat a hair. The girl will ride the station pony which the yellow-hide rode down here. I'm not asking you for any ponies."

"My young men say the ponies have walked away. They will hunt for them and find them after another sleep," was the imperturbable reply.

Impelled by a fresh suspicion, Uncle Dick began looking for his horse. The animal had disappeared, nor could he see the Mexican's mount. For some reason the chief had determined to keep him and Miss Isobel in amiable captivity overnight. He firmly believed the Quail was responsible for this behavior and, without a word to the chief, he repaired to the teepee of the women and called the Quail by name.

She crawled forth, as blank of visage as when he had attempted to learn her reason for bringing the girl down the pass. Sternly warning her he would stand no more nonsense, he reiterated his intention of starting for the station.

"Do you go with me or stay behind with your people?" he demanded.

She tilted her head on one side and closed her eyes in a pantomime of sleep. Then said in English—

"Then go."

"You have talked to Yellow Bear. He stays here one sleep because you told him something," he accused.

"Up there —— bad! One sleep—all good," she answered in a monotonous singsong; then turned and crawled back into the teepee.

"I'm ready to start at any time, Uncle Dick," called out Miss Isobel from the depths of the teepee. "And I'm very impatient, too."

"Uh-huh," mumbled Uncle Dick, filling his pipe. "Sorry to disapp'int you, little girl, but I've arranged to stick along here for another night. Few things I want to look into."

He hurried away to escape her questions and, as he viciously puffed his pipe, he mumbled:

"Both of us prisoners along of some whim that's crawled into that squaw's thick head. Well, thank the Lord they're Arapahoes and not Kiowas."

While he killed time and endeavored to quiet Miss Isobel's curiosity and coax her from her impatient mood, a warrior of the Blue-Cloud people was riding like a streak at the command of the medicine of the Stone Turtle, the Ear of Corn and the Sacred Flat Pipe. Dark forces were at work along the foot of Raton Range against this tribal medicine. And all this—the galloping

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warrior, the greed of bandits, the chagrin of an old mountain man and the impatience of a fair girl—had resulted because, once upon a time, a regiment of Spanish soldiers had vanished, and because a certain river had taken a name to commemorate the mysterious tragedy.

CHAPTER X

THE RIVER OF LOST SOULS

MORNING found the Arapahoes uncommunicative as to their plans. The Quail refused to converse in her native tongue and took refuge in broken English when interrogated by Uncle Dick. Yellow Bear persisted in his transparent subterfuge of being unable to find the mountaineer's horses. And yet, as the day advanced, Uncle Dick perceived the chief and the Quail were marking time, as if awaiting some dénouement. At last Yellow Bear came to where Uncle Dick was half-asleep in the shadow of the women's teepee and announced—

"They say my young men have found Cut-Hand's horses."

"Good!" exclaimed Uncle Dick, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "The medicine of the Turtle is very strong. Now we can go."

"The Arapahoes will ride with Cut-Hand. Cut-Hand's horses have wandered far and are tired. We must ride slow."

Uncle Dick gravely agreed to the wisdom of this, and stood up to look about for his animals. His horse and the one ridden into camp by the renegade Mexican showed no signs of exhaustion; rather, they appeared to be in the pink of condition. However, Yellow Bear's polite fiction was intended to cover some serious precaution, and the mountaineer was now reconciled to playing the game according to the rules laid down by his friends.

Miss Isobel came from the teepee with the Quail at her heels. The girl's flushed face betrayed impatience and a touch of irritation. She eagerly demanded:

"Is it true we can go home? The Quail says so, I think, only her English is hard to understand at times. And, Uncle Dick, she—she swears—sometimes!"

"Shoo! That can't be!" cried Uncle Dick in mock horror. "The Injuns must have taught her."

The Quail waddled to them and turned her imperturbable countenance toward the pass, as she informed—

"Now —— good up there."

"Are you ready to talk?" asked Uncle Dick in Arapaho.

She stared at him stupidly and replied in English—

"Bime-by, mebbe."

"She ain't ready and wild horses couldn't hurry her," growled Uncle Dick. "My dear, some folks will tell you that the whites learned the Injuns to swear. It ain't so. It's such ways of acting as the Quail's shown the last twenty-four hours that taught the white man to cuss. Anyway, we'll soon be getting out of this."

Uncle Dick brought up his horses and then was forced to wait while Yellow Bear leisurely saw to it that the teepees were struck and the poles of each tied in two bunches. Rawhide ropes were passed through holes made in the upper ends of the poles, and a bunch of poles was lashed on each side of a pony.

To the impatient mountain man and the girl, the chief appeared to be overparticular in arranging, in front of the saddle, the rawhide rope that brought the ends of the poles across the pony's shoulders. What was ordinarily the work of a few minutes was tediously dawdled over and protracted. Next came the work of lashing the teepee coverings over the poles behind the ponies, so as to form litters. This, also, was done so painstakingly as to leave no doubt as to the chief's desire to kill time. Contrary to custom, the Quail did not help in the work but stood with her face turned toward the east, her small eyes searching for something.

Finally the last teepee had been reduced to a travois and the Quail muttered something to Yellow Bear and climbed on to a litter. The chief motioned for Isobel to do likewise, but the girl flamed out in rebellion and flatly announced—

"I will ride a horse."

Uncle Dick repeated this to Yellow Bear, who darted a glance at the blank visage of the Quail and then repeated his gestured command. For an answer the girl sprang on to a horse and cantered toward the river. Uncle Dick chuckled aloud, glad that his stubborn friends should be taught a lesson in independence of spirit, and mounted his own animal. The effect on the Quail, however, was remarkable. With

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an agility one would never expect of her, she leaped from the travois, caught a warrior's pony and was astride and off at a gallop, signaling for the Indians to follow.

The Indians ran to their ponies and Uncle Dick raced away, with his friends streaming after him. He had been amused at Isobel's defiance; now he was afraid. This was because the Quail was taking the situation very seriously, as was shown by her desperate efforts to overtake the runaway. Uncle Dick shouted for the girl to halt, and by this time the Indians were giving voice and the Quail was squalling commands and exhortations, but Isobel heard nothing intelligible in the confusion. To her it was a game. Forced to inactivity, her high spirits now had full play. Rejoicing in the freedom of action, she welcomed the chase, waved her hand defiantly and shrilly urged her mount to greater efforts.

The pursuit quickly entered a stretch of broken country, where low, bald sand-hills and scattered rocks frequently hid the quarry from the chase. The Quail increased her exhibition of alarm. The direction taken by the girl and the course of the river formed, some miles distant, the converging sides of a triangle.

"That squaw's afraid of the river! If the fool had only told me things, instead of keeping her mouth shut, I'd know what to look out for," muttered Uncle Dick.

HAVING started ahead of the Indians, he was riding next behind the Quail, a hundred yards between them. Close on his heels rode Yellow Bear, his men strung out behind him. While glancing over his shoulder, Uncle Dick was off his guard for a moment and his horse stepped in a hole. Uncle Dick was thrown but fortunately landed on sand.

As he lay on his back, pumping for breath, Yellow Bear flashed by without a glance at his dismounted friend. The mountain man crawled to his feet and examined his horse. The animal was able to walk and that was all. Several other warriors had passed, all of them ignoring him. Uncle Dick jumped before a pony and waved his hat, calling on the warrior to take him up behind. With the quickness of a cat the pony swerved aside and raced on. In the fleeting glimpse of his face Uncle Dick recognized the Man-Who-Strikes-Alone, formerly Crooked Arm, now burning with lust to give his chief a race for the grand climax and count a coup.

"——!" yelled Uncle Dick, flinging up his arms and gesturing frantically at the line of warriors now speeding by him and sprinkling him with sand.

With their eager faces glaring to the front, each holding a revolver or a breech-loading rifle high above the head, none gave him any heed. In desperation the mountain men raised his rifle and covered one of the rearmost figures, that of Big Knife. This brave's sojourn at the station had covered him with fat and depleted his ambition, so the menacing muzzle brought him to a plunging halt.

"Hop down! Quick!" bellowed Uncle Dick, now in a sweat of fear as he perceived that not only the girl and the Quail had swept out of sight, but also the bulk of the warriors.

Big Knife grunted resignedly and fell off his pony. Uncle Dick sprang into the saddle and with a kick of his heel sent the animal scurrying onward. The pony was swift and sure of foot and his rider's zeal to head the chase soon carried him among the Indians, but except for brief glimpses Yellow Bear and the two women remained hidden from view as they wound in and out among the clutter of rocks or up and down over the low sand-ridges.

With the exception of a few of the foremost braves, the Indians rode in single file, the head of the flying procession regulating the speed of the others. Disgusted at being pocketed in the rear, Uncle Dick decided to chance a short cut and swerved aside toward the river.

Unless overtaken, the meandering course of the girl would bring her to the Purgatory. The path the mountain man proposed to take was to the course of the others as is the cord to a tautly strung bow. He yelled to the Indians behind to follow him, but either they did not understand or else they preferred to stick to the eccentric path, for, after a half a mile of reckless scrambling, the mountaineer's pony had left the body of the chase to one side. Uncle Dick ascended a sand-mound and watched for the women and Yellow Bear to appear.

As he looked, he heard the general chorus of the pursuit change in timbre and become a series of explosive yells, quickly accentuated by the banging of guns. Beyond the mound was a higher cone of sand and up this the mountain man drove his pony.

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His range of view was now widened and he could catch flitting glimpses of the Arapahoes. He saw they were dismounting and taking cover, at the same time firing their guns. Puzzled and greatly alarmed, he waited; then a line of ponies swept into sight beyond the Arapahoes. Each pony carried an Indian clinging to the animal's side and firing from under his neck.

"——! Kiowas!" he snarled, fidgeting with his rifle. "What's their game? Satanta must be crazy to fetch a war-pipe against the Arapahoes!"

He tried to count the galloping ponies as they weaved back and forth, and estimated their number to be no more, if as many, as that of his friends. "It ain't like 'em!" he fumed. "They can't expect to stampede any ponies in a daylight attack. What can Satanta be thinking of?"

Another peculiarity of the attack quickly impressed him. The two bands were inflicting no injury on each other. The Kiowas kept beyond accurate rifle-range and seemed to be satisfied with holding the Arapahoes to the rocks.

"It's a game old Satanta is up to!" yelled Uncle Dick, as if he could make his friends hear. "He's only hoping to hold up my Injuns, and, by Hen, he's doing it!"

The Arapahoes now realized the futility of such warfare and, having learned the maximum strength of their assailants, mounted their ponies to carry the fighting into the open. As they began riding from cover, Uncle Dick caught the faint notes of a bugle, and the Kiowas commenced drawing back. Encouraged at this demonstration of weakness, the Arapahoes howled triumphantly and pressed forward.

"Playing the game just as that old devil of a Satanta planned 'em to," groaned Uncle Dick.

The whole business was bewildering. It was scarcely conceivable that the head of the Kiowa nation should open war on the Arapahoes because of their refusal to join the proposed alliance of plains tribes against the whites. If war between the two tribes were to be a fact, why should the Kiowas lose the great advantage of a surprize attack? This open betrayal of their hostile intentions won Satanta nothing.

The mystery deepened as Uncle Dick saw his friends being decoyed farther into the open ground. There was no wood nor rocks beyond, within strategic distance, where an ambush could be waiting. And had there been any such point, the Kiowas had no men to work the trap. Uncle Dick had learned Satanta's strength when he had visted the chief's lodge, and he knew that all of Satanta's men were participating in this senseless attack and soon must retreat in earnest, or be badly whipped by the Arapahoes.

Nevertheless, the indubitable fact remained that Satanta never moved without a purpose. Now he was eliminating the bulk of the Arapahoes from their pursuit of Miss Isobel. Consequently his purpose must be connected with the girl, reasoned Uncle Dick. Then all the more need of haste in throwing protectors about her, was the logical conclusion, and his pony slid down the cone on his haunches and was sent along a course that ran parallel to the river.

A HALF a mile, and the broken ground was cut by a ribbon of grassland. It led like a lane from the open plains to the river, perhaps marking the ancient bed of a tributary of the Purgatory. It was about a mile in width at its widest point and was fenced in on the farther side by rough, broken country.

As Uncle Dick came to this comparatively smooth area, he beheld Isobel, the Quail and Yellow Bear. The girl was well advanced toward the river, her flight apparently forced in that direction by the forbidden rocky waste beyond. She had halted her panting pony and was looking back toward the sound of the fighting.

The Quail was flogging her pony in an anxious endeavor to reach her. The chief was riding furiously at a considerable distance behind the Quail and, like her, Uncle Dick observed, he kept his head turned toward the northeast, entirely ignoring the firing behind him.

"Girl's scared and don't want to run away no more. She's afraid to turn back because of the fighting. The chief and the squaw are more afraid of the rocks over across than of what's happening back along —Jumping hen!"

Uncle Dick drove his heels into his pony's ribs as a party of six horsemen suddenly dashed from the rocks across the opening. They were white men and were galloping to cut in between the two women and the chief. Their horses were fresh and Yellow Bear's pony was tired.

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As Uncle Dick rode forward to cut in ahead of the chief, the latter began firing his rifle at the white men. Without drawing rein, they returned his fire. The Quail, now almost up to the girl, began shooting at the strangers with a revolver. Isobel wheeled her pony and rode toward the river, the only avenue open to her.

Uncle Dick was now near enough to observe that one of the strangers wore a black mask, while his followers had their faces half-covered with handkerchiefs. The mountaineer halted his pony and, with great care, covered a bobbing figure. He fired and two men went down. With a whoop of encouragement he turned to wave congratulations to the chief, but was amazed to behold him galloping along with a revolver in his hand, having discarded his rifle.

"Some shooting!" yelped Uncle Dick. "Nails a man with a revolver at that distance while both are going hellity-brindle! Couldn't do it again in a million years! But he don't seem to take no pride in it. Not a single howl. Well, that cuts 'em down to four."

Now the masked horsemen took notice of the mountaineer and one drew rein and fired with deliberate care. Uncle Dick heard the bullets but did not pause to return them. The mystery of the Kiowa attack was plain. Gentleman Ralph had induced the disgruntled Satanta to aid in the abduction of the girl to the extent of keeping the Arapahoes busy while the outlaws carried her off. Isobel's display of independence had furnished the road-agents with a most excellent opportunity.

Yellow Bear had now begun singing his death-song and discharging his revolver without any effect. The outlaws no longer concerned themselves with the chief but sent all their lead in Uncle Dick's direction. One would halt and empty his gun and then dash forward, while another stopped to repeat the tactics. But, because of the distance and the difficulty of hitting a man on a galloping horse, none of the bullets registered, and the mountain man grimly witheld his fire.

Suddenly there came a puff of smoke from the rocks above the point where the outlaws had broken from cover, and one of the outlaws threw up his hands in salute to death and fell from his horse.

"Godfrey! It was him, whoever he may be, and not the chief that emptied that saddle along with me!" hoarsely cried Uncle Dick.

This assault on their right caused something of a panic among the remaining three men. They paid no further attention to the mountaineer but concentrated all their efforts on reaching the girl. To remind them he was still in the game, and because the ally hidden among the rocks made him less niggardly with his lead, Uncle Dick now began shooting, but without halting his pony. None of his shots took effect and they only served to quicken the outlaws' pace. The man in the rocks fired twice but failed to score.

The position of the masked men was now hopeless, unless they could overtake the two women and use them as shields. Behind them rode Yellow Bear, shouting hoarsely. On either side was a deadly enemy, as proven by the three empty saddles. Nor was the quarry ahead to be captured with impunity, even when overtaken, for the Quail, now close behind the girl, half-turned in her saddle, revolver half-raised, holding her fire for close quarters.

In a final effort to run the women down, the man in the black mask drew a bit ahead of his two companions and as he rode he raised his rifle and began firing. The Quail's pony collapsed in a heap, throwing the squaw heavily.

A bugle sounded among the rocks, and Uncle Dick groaned aloud and watched for Satanta and his braves to break from cover and make the chase hopelessly uneven. Again the bugle rang out and the black cloaked figure, now almost up to the girl, glanced behind him.

Into the open dashed the horsemen, making a brave show in their cavalry uniforms.

"More of Ralph's devils made up as soldiers!" gritted Uncle Dick.

Yellow Bear came to a halt, undecided as to what to do. Uncle Dick flogged his weary pony on. The newcomers swerved into line behind the outlaws and, to Uncle Dick's astonishment and great joy, began shooting. Thiat this was no make-believe was evidenced by the hindmost outlaw's plunging from his saddle. His mate frantically raced along beside his chief. As the two swept by the Quail, she raised her revolver and fired, but they swung low from the saddle and kept on.

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They overhauled Isobel, one riding at each side of her, Gentleman Ralph grasping her pony by the bits. Uncle Dick glanced toward the cavalrymen now pounding in pursuit, but restrained himself from shooting, for fear of hitting the girl. During the brief interval while he was watching Gentleman Ralph overtake the girl, the cavalrymen had gained an addition to their number, a man wearing the peaked hat of a Mexican.

The girl and her captors turned downstream on reaching the river-bank and vanished behind the shoulder of a high ledge. They were making for the narrow path that led into the cañon.

As the troopers gallantly took the bend, Uncle Dick fell in beside Yellow Bear. When the two came to the ledge they beheld the soldiers, with the Mexican in the lead, following the narrow path in single file, but there was no sign of the outlaws and their prisoners. Above the roar of the tumbling waters the bugle sounded, and the troopers dismounted and advanced on foot. Uncle Dick followed their example, but Yellow Bear remained in the saddle.

FAR ahead a twisted pine clung to the edge of the path, its stunted and distorted arms waving in the breeze as if warning the troopers to fall back.

Yellow Bear leaned from the saddle, his face grave with fear of the supernatural, and cried in Uncle Dick's ear:

"Bad medicine! Bad for the Indian! Bad for the white men!"

"It's going to be —— bad for them two rips that stole my girl," bawled back Uncle Dick, and, trailing his rifle, he advanced at a trot and came up with the troopers.

He had just reached the pine when a rifle cracked and a soldier went down with a bullet through his leg. The men scrambled to cover, taking the wounded man with them. Uncle Dick assumed the post of surgeon and found the leg was broken.

"I'm Dick Wooton of Raton Pass," he briefly explained. "How did you boys get wind of this business?"

"Pass the word down the line to Lieutenant Camp that Uncle Dick Wooton of Raton Pass is here," called out a trooper.

The message was repeated and after a few minutes young Lieutenant Camp stealthily gained the boulder behind which the mountain man was concealed.

The lieutenant explained.

"A young Arapaho rode in with a message from Yellow Bear. Said that Satanta was up this way and about to kick up trouble. We wouldn't have placed much stock in it if any one but Yellow Bear had sent the warning. The bugle hadn't any more than sounded 'boots and saddle' before a white man came—he's ahead with a big hat on—and told us the same thing and more. He can introduce himself to you.

"Enough to say his word was sufficient to bring us humping, even if we hadn't believed the Arapaho. You sent some word to Colonel Leavenworth, didn't you? I knew it because an Arapaho runner brought your message to me and I hustled it along. It's known at the fort that you tipped him off about Satanta being up here. How's your leg?" The last was spoken to the wounded man.

"—— that leg! It'll keep me out of the wind-up," growled the trooper.

"You'll be so close to the wind-up you won't miss much," encouraged the lieutenant. Then to Uncle Dick: "Do you know what sort of place they're hiding in?"

Uncle Dick pointed to the twisted pine, nearly abreast of their position, and informed:

"About fifty-six paces from that is a deep opening under the cliff. Gentleman Ralph's gang has been using it for a hiding-place. Reckon they're in that."

The lieutenant whistled and admitted—

"Well, that makes it kind of binding." Then determinedly: "But the skunks must be dug out."

From ahead came a thin, whimpering voice that shrilly penetrated the babel of the river. It announced—

"You all go back or we'll kill the girl; then we'll kill ourselves."

"The hell-hound! He'll do it, too, lieutenant," groaned Uncle Dick. "Tell him he can go scot-free if he'll send the girl to us."

The lieutenant cursed vigorously.

"If I don't bag that man," he was growling, when the wailing voice broke in, saying—

"You've got just five minutes to clear out in."

"He's crawled out of his hole and is behind one of those rocks!" yelled a trooper ahead.

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"Yes, I crawled out here but I'm going to walk back," promptly informed the high-pitched voice. "If I don't get back my partner will do for the girl."

He rose from his hiding-place, a black-cloaked figure with a black mask concealing his features. Turning leisurely, he faced toward the opening under the cliff and called over his shoulder:

"About four minutes left now. Remember, no extra time allowed."

LIEUTENANT CAMP called to his bugler to sound "retreat," garnishing the command with several oaths. The bugler raised his instrument to his lips. Gentleman Ralph turned and was laughing in shrill mockery, when his companion's head appeared for a few moments and he called out something. The bandit leader plunged toward the opening, shouting:

"You cursed fool! Get back in there!"

But the man in the Mexican hat, crouching in advance of the foremost of the troopers, leaped to his feet with a yell of triumph and cried:

"T'other feller says the girl has disappeared! She's dodged them!"

"Forward! Rush them!" bawled the lieutenant, dashing ahead.

Gentleman Ralph appeared for a moment and fired a shot at the men now quitting their hiding-places.

"The girl's still in there. In a little cave in back of the main room!" Uncle Dick cried in the lieutenant's ear.

"Dead men's bones! Bad medicine!" bleated Yellow Bear, yet urging his pony forward.

Guns cracked from the mouth of the opening and two troopers went down. Uncle Dick advanced regardless of consequences, keeping abreast of the young lieutenant and intending to be the first under the cliff. The Mexican was ahead of him and, as he caught a glimpse of the shoulders and peaked hat, he was curiously reminded of the drunken Mexican who had stood at the Happy Fortune bar. With his revolver ready, he bowed his head and raced the lieutenant to the opening.

"You let her go, —— you!" raged a deep, strident voice inside. Obviously the voice of Gentleman Ralph and yet not a bit like his.

"Liar! Take that for clubbin' me in the cañon!" roared a second voice.

As Uncle Dick gained the opening he was in time to see the man in the black cloak go down in a heap. His slayer, now minus any face covering, swung about, but the Mexican was a second the quicker. His peaked hat gave a jerk and the outlaw dropped beside his chief.

The troopers now swarmed in while Yellow Bear remained outside to chant a song-prayer in which he invoked the evil spirits of the place to pass him by in their distribution of bad luck. Uncle Dick dropped beside the man killed by the Mexican and grunted:

"Chuckle-Luck! Did for his boss before he got his!"

Lieutenant Camp now tore the mask from the other man, and Uncle Dick gave an incredulous cry and fell back, both hands over his eyes:

"Good Lord! It can't be possible!" he groaned. "Joe Peace—Gentleman Ralph! Gentleman Ralph—Joe Peace. Oh, I'm glad it wa'n't my lead that had to get him!"

"I've suspected it for some time," said a calm voice behind him, "but I wasn't sure till within the last forty-eight hours."

The voice was very familiar. Uncle Dick turned and slowly looked up into the face shaded by the big hat. It required a second glance before he recognized in the dark, stained features the face of Sam Keene.

"I give in. I don't *sabe* much of nothing," he mumbled dully.

"I wanted to tell you certain things I suspected when you invited me to the station, Mr. Wooton, but you were so friendly with this man, believed in him so thoroughly, I didn't dare yip till I had absolute proof. Not that I suspected at that time that he was boss of the gang, but I believed he was a member."

"Would you kindly tell an old man who'n —— you might be?" timidly asked Uncle Dick.

"Oh, I've used my own name, Sam Keene. Sent here by the Overland to clean things up a bit. But we're forgetting the girl! The soldiers don't seem to find her."

With a little cry of alarm Uncle Dick hurried to the rear of the recess where the lieutenant was conducting a blind search. Uncle Dick fumbled along the wall; then some one lighted a splinter of wood and he found it. The crack measured a little over a foot in width and extended diago-

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nally across the rock. Thrusting his head through this, he called her by name. There was no response and he repeated it, this time adding:

"Old Uncle Dick, honey, come to take you home. Everything is all right. Don't be skeered. Every one out here is a friend."

Out of the inner darkness came two plump arms which locked about the mountain man's neck. Then her head came into the torchlight and she and the old mountaineer formed a pleasing tableau for the troopers.

"I was looking for a hole close to the floor, miss," cried the lieutenant, snatching off his hat and bowing low.

Twisting his head about without escaping the encircling arms, Uncle Dick glared at the forms on the floor and from the corner of his mouth ordered:

"Blankets! Douse that light!"

When the dead men were covered up and the light extinguished, permitting the shadows and gloom of the place to return, Keene spoke up, saying:

"You'll find it more comfortable to come outside, Miss Isobel, to finish hugging Uncle Dick."

The arms about the abashed mountain man's neck tightened convulsively. Then the girl glided through the opening, rejoicing:

"That's Mr. Keene's voice. I'm so glad!"

THE troopers had made their camp back from the point where the pursuit turned into the river-path. The Quail had her charge at one side and Keene took the opportunity to explain to Uncle Dick:

"When I commenced the job I looked the ground over from both ends. We knew that the Ralph of California fame was dead, but the fact that the new leader took the name suggested he must be one who had been in California while Ralph was active there. I was looking for such a man when I decided there were two possible ways of working into the truth: Through Turkey Bill or through Baptiste. Turkey Bill was keeping a woman and spending a lot more money on her than his pay would explain. Baptiste was born bad and was sure to know something about the gang if its headquarters were near his trading-store. I had just one man in my confidence, the sheriff at Las Vegas. He watched that end of the trail while I worked up here.

"I think I made a mistake in going to Muddy Creek. It attracted Peace's attention to me. Of course I didn't know anything about Peace then and was going it blind. But I can see that his agents must have reported about me to him. I was a stranger. Baptiste was easy to fool. He believed I was turning trader because I didn't dare go back to the States. I planned to get into the gang through him. I hated to make a row over the buckskin pouch found on Boy Charlie, but I thought it might contain some important evidence and that the breed would make way with it.

"Still, even the duel wouldn't have spoiled my game with him and I would have kept on playing trader and getting into his confidence if you hadn't arrived and begun firing questions about a white woman and the outlaws. Both Baptiste and I had heard about the white woman from Indians. After you'd asked your questions and told us it was Boy Charlie we had buried, I was anxious to talk more with you.

"Baptiste knew it was Boy Charlie who had died on our hands, but I didn't, until you told us. So I wanted to get settled at your station, pose as a prospector and scour the country round the pass. If Gentleman Ralph was keeping tabs on me my history would be straight— Failure as a trader and now trying gold-hunting.

"Before you came I'd dogged Baptiste and knew he used to meet some of the gang, but I wanted to get in on the inside where I could meet the leader. I had some different rigs hidden in my shack and, when I went south to see the Las Vegas sheriff and keep tabs on Turkey Bill, I wore different kinds of clothes. Then I went up to the station and saw the young lady. Well, you stopped me talking to her and Peace got ugly.

"Peace didn't size up good to me. He didn't ring true as a prospector. I suspected from the first that he was hooked up with the gang. Then the girl was stolen and he asked me to go with him to gun for robbers. He suggested we separate and take opposite sides of the pass. First thing I knew he was shootin' at me."

"Why, he told me that you shot at him," broke in Uncle Dick.

"I'm not surprized," smiled Keene. "The first bullet satisfied me he was behind

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the gun that fired it, and that proved to me he was one of the gang. Then the suspicion began to grow up that he was the leader, Gentleman Ralph. Convinced he was at least one of the gang I believed he couldn't be away from it so much unless he was the boss. I had known right along that the leader wasn't always with the gang and it had puzzled me to imagine where he was staying.

"After separating from Peace in the pass that night, I tried to find him next morning. I put a handkerchief over my face and rode down the road, hoping to spot one of the outlaws and have him mistake me for a pal. If I could catch one of them I was confident I could make him squeal on the others. I met one of the gang and he surprized me by beginning to shoot. I chased him down the road, swapping bullets. That man was Peace."

"Then he had one of his men hold up the coach and send me the note signed 'Gentleman Ralph.' I'd reckoned it was one of his men that did that," mumbled Uncle Dick, only he did not add that his reason for thinking this was because he had believed Keene to be the leader of the bandits.

"The note demanding the surrender of the girl was a play to get me away from the station. Perhaps he thought you, too, might go along to catch some of the gang when they held up the coach to get your answer. After decoying us away to hunt robbers, he would slip back and steal the girl. He did that.

"I think that from the beginning of my coming to the station he was uneasy about me. Then came the fight in the cañon. I was hiding on the trail that enters the upper end. I was there when they rode through after being licked by your Indians. Peace was whining and cursing and I knew he had been hit."

Uncle Dick interrupted to tell of seeing Peace in the cañon, posing as a prisoner. Keene remarked:

"I reckon he was taken back when he saw you. He didn't know how many were with you, or how you got in there. He was Gentleman Ralph and riding toward the mouth of the cañon when he first saw you. He wanted to get clear, even if he had to leave the girl, but the Arapahoes, who were behind him, got in front of him and then he had to fall back. He was afraid of the reception he'd meet when passing the shack. That's why he had one of his men wear his mask and cloak while he wound a rope about his body and pretended to be a prisoner. He fooled you and you quit firing for fear of hitting him. He quit the gang at the head of the cañon and rode back alone. It was when he returned that he was cursing about his arm."

"Got plugged after he shot Detel!" interpolated Uncle Dick.

"You understand I never saw him unmasked till today," continued Keene. "After showing up before you in the cañon as a prisoner, he put on his cloak and mask but, because of the darkness, I couldn't have recognized him even if he had been unmasked. The gang scattered that night. I followed at random, hoping to keep on the leader's trail, but he slipped away on one of the back trails."

"Played off he was knocked out of his senses by falling from the horse. One of my Mexicans was in his pay and helped him into the station," growled Uncle Dick.

"When morning came I was south of the pass, chasing Chuckle-Luck and some of the others. I still believed Gentleman Ralph was ahead. I lost the trail; then picked it up outside of Whoa-Haw. I saw you the minute I entered the Happy Fortune——"

"Mexican! Peaked hat!"

"And very drunk," added Keene with a whimsical grin. "You really owe me something for shooting out the lights and dropping Shorty.

"It was on my last trip south that I arranged with the company to send the box of marked coins. The Las Vegas sheriff took care of that end of it and arrested Turkey Bill and myself. Bill was just ready to give up everything when the gang killed him."

"Say, you wasn't in any danger of being hung at all!" cried Uncle Dick.

"Not so long as the sheriff was on the job. But when I saw them shoot him down I'll admit I got scared. After they fired through the window and did for Bill, the rest was easy.

"I followed the trail up here and got in touch with Lieutenant Camp as it was a part of my plan to use the troopers in combing the country along the Purgatory. The Arapaho messenger from Yellow Bear was ahead of me with word that Satanta was raising the devil, so the troopers were on the way when I found them.

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There's no doubt but what Peace bribed Satanta to keep the Arapahoes busy while he stole the girl again."

"And there's no doubt but what he wrote the two notes the Mexican tried to deliver," said Uncle Dick bitterly, producing the messages for inspection. "He had started the notes on their way before he learned about my affair with Baptiste."

"Isobel is her real name?"

"Isobel Deland."

Lowering his voice, Uncle Dick related the girl's history.

"Peace was taken with her," mused Keene. "Who wouldn't be?" he added with a sigh. "But he was crazy to get gold. Now I understand why he was so determined to steal her. To think it was his trying to get her secret that brought him to his death! And all the time the gold was within a few feet of where his gang was hiding. I said you owed me something for shooting out the lights in the Happy Fortune. Pay up! I want a chance to talk with her."

Uncle Dick pursed his lips thoughtfully. Finally he said:

"Keene, I done you wrong in thinking certain thoughts. Now I know you're all right, but the girl ain't had time to catch her breath. The talking must wait, I reckon, till she shows some hankering to be talked to. We'll let it go at that."

"You're the boss," said Keene, rising. "I think I've gone over about everything. Are you going to cover up the truth about Peace?"

"No! The truth wasn't kept covered about her uncle. The Joe Peace I used to know never lived. I don't see why his true natur' should be kept hid. Then again, every one else will know about it and she'd be sure to find out. The quicker she knows just what he was the better it will be."

"Amen!"

This was spoken so heartily that Uncle Dick stared round-eyed; then dryly observed—

"I was forgetting that you two was sort of jealous of each other."

"I'm almost jealous of him now," replied Keene, turning away to join Lieutenant Camp.

Uncle Dick stood a moment looking after the young man and chuckling. Then he went to look for Yellow Bear.

UNCLE Dick found Yellow Bear welcoming his warriors, who had just straggled in.

"Where is Satanta?" he asked.

"My men say he and his warriors ran away," haughtily replied the chief.

"Satanta knew about some bones under the cliff and was afraid of them."

"The bones are bad medicine," answered the chief uneasily.

"The Arapahoes have known about them for a long time?"

"The medicine of the bones got Little Pony when he rode after the medicine-woman."

"You kept us in your camp to give your man time to bring the Long Knives."

"Satanta was near the mouth of the pass, waiting to get the medicine-woman."

"Why are those bones bad medicine?"

Yellow Bear hesitated for a minute or so; then said:

"It isn't talked about among the Indians. To speak of it brings bad luck. But the medicine of the white woman is stronger than the medicine of the bones. A very long time ago, when the new grass was up, some Spanish soldiers marched down this river, going to the Arkansas. They were attacked by Kiowas and by a few—a very few Arapahoes. Those who were not killed in the first attack fell back to the river and entered the cañon. They hid in the hole under the cliff. There was the river very near and they had no water. Many were killed trying to get water.

"After it was all over the Kiowas found the hole through the wall and put them in there so their bones might not be found by other soldiers and war made on us. But they were bad medicine for us. Before the leaves dropped off the trees in the mountains, many Kiowas and Arapahoes died of smallpox. The soldiers had it. We lost many fighting men. We never go near that place where the bones are."

"I see," murmured Uncle Dick. "The River of Lost Souls. Of course. But why did the Quail take the girl from the station?"

"Ask the Quail," advised the chief, his face lowering, so Uncle Dick deduced he did not know the reason.

Uncle Dick went to the Quail and this time found her ready to talk. It was all over; no one was left to harm Preety. It was all very simple. By accident she had

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seen Peace talking with the Mexican who tended the gate. Their manner had been so stealthy that she had spied on them. She had seen Peace give the Mexican a paper and so she followed the latter down the toll-road and up the slope. There he had made a small smoke and very soon a man, a stranger who wore many revolvers in his belt, joined him. The Mexican gave this man the paper and then returned to the station, where he reported to Peace. This was the day before Peace rode to the south after the mountaineer.

After Peace departed, the Mexican slipped away from the station a second time and again the Quail followed him. This time he went as far as Devil's Elbow and made a smoke, one that would last some time, and then hurried back to the station. The first signal had called a man from the bush to get a talking-paper. The second was left to burn. She reasoned that if the second smoke was to call any one, it would call the one who had received the paper. The talking-paper had been some order; the second smoke was another order. Instantly she had become alarmed for Preety. Instinct, which she called medicine, told her to fly. That was all.

Uncle Dick returned to the troopers and sought out the lieutenant, who was smoking a pipe with Keene. The mountaineer briefly explained how the girl had found the nuggets and expressed a desire to take advantage of the soldiers' presence to search for more gold.

"By all means!" eagerly agreed the lieutenant. "Only don't advertise it as a gold hunt, or some of my men will be deserting. Mr. Keene and I will go with you. We three ought to be enough. I'll get some wood for torches. It'll be great fun. Here's hoping the young lady nets a million out of it!"

"The no-talk-to-Miss-Isobel rule holds good for the lieutenant as well as for me, doesn't it?" anxiously asked Keene as the officer set out to find some dry sticks.

"I ain't playing no favorites," soothed Uncle Dick.

Gaining the hollow under the cliff, they lighted a torch and passed through into the cave-chamber. At the back of this were piled nearly twoscore skeletons. Relics of ancient firearms and the metal of accoutrements littered the floor. But what held their eager attention were the fragments of buckskin bags and the handful of nuggets by each. The bags had rotted or been torn to pieces by animals, and, in some instances, the nuggets were scattered; in others they were found in little mounds, as if carefully piled. The three pursued their quest until they had collected them all and then Uncle Dick gave his opinion.

"Yellow Bear says they marched down this way in the Spring. They must have wintered back in the country somewhere. While waiting to march they found these nuggets. They were never picked up in this cañon. It all proves that gold was discovered in Colorado many years before fifty-eight. Nowhere near as much as I'd hoped."

"Six thousand dollars is my rough estimate, if they all run as clean as these I've examined," said the lieutenant. "Quite a distance from the million I was wishing her."

"Hurrah," softly cheered Keene.

"You'd rather she wouldn't have the million?" cried the lieutenant indignantly.

"Ever so much rather," was the fervid response.

"I see," drawled the lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT CAMP and his men were about to bid good-by to Uncle Dick and his friends, when a band of Indians came galloping toward them. The Arapahoes displayed much excitement, for Satanta was in the lead. His warriors halted, and, raising both open palms, Satanta came riding up alone.

"My brothers the Arapahoes, and my white brothers, I come to warn you there are bad Indians near here," he began. "They hid behind rocks and fired on my young men. My men have been chasing Ute horse-thieves. We were on our way to Medicine Lodge Creek to sign the great peace treaty when we were attacked. I told my young men to fall back and they did so. No blood was spilled, but my brothers should keep their eyes open."

Yellow Bear's cold visage lighted with admiration at Satanta's earnestness. Before Uncle Dick could find his tongue to upbraid the Kiowa for his effrontery, Yellow Bear gravely replied:

"We thank our brother of the Kiowas. Did his young men say what tribe these bad Indians belonged to?"

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"They believe they are Utes," replied Satanta, his gaze never flickering as he stared at Yellow Bear.

"It must be so," solemnly declared Yellow Bear, "for my young men were fired upon by bad Indians, just as the Kiowas were. It would be bad medicine for the plains tribes if they fought against each other. Let the Kiowas ride away with the Long Knives; then, if they are attacked again, the Long Knives can say they were not to blame."

Uncle Dick rapidly interpreted this to Lieutenant Camp, who with difficulty suppressed a smile as he declared:

"The words of the Arapaho are good. The Kiowas shall ride with me and no bad Indians shall harm them. We will see them far on their road to Medicine Lodge Creek, where their little father, Colonel Leavenworth, waits to give them presents." And, at his command, the troopers surrounded Satanta.

The chief bit his lips; then turned a face that expressed only gratitude toward the officer and gave a signal to his warriors. They cantered forward and fell in behind their chief and his guards. A curt command and Satanta, greatest of all Kiowa chiefs, now that Dohasan was dead, had commenced the journey which was to end only after he had duly signed the treaty by those waters where for so many years his people had held their annual sun-dance.

KEENE rode ahead, his bearing dejected. Isobel, beside Uncle Dick, with the Quail riding behind, began to show signs of uneasiness. Finally she asked—

"Is he—Mr. Keene angry with me?"

"Lord, no, little woman!"

"Then why does he keep away from us?"

"Probably just his way."

"Then it's not a nice way. I want him to talk to me."

"Uh-huh? Meaning he is to talk to you?"

"He makes me laugh and forget sober things," she explained, turning her head aside.

"Keene wins!" muttered Uncle Dick, spurring ahead.

Reining in by the side of the disconsolate young man, he informed:

"I know this trail better'n you do. I'll go ahead and blaze the way."

"Trail? It's a toll-road. A blind man could follow it," retorted Keene.

"You dod-burned young idiot. She's lifted the gate. Reckon it means you can pass through. But don't think for a second you won't pay plenty of toll before the whole journey's over. Can't you get it through your thick head that she wants you to talk to her?"

And through the dusk of the pass they rode, ever climbing up to where the top of the range was still light with day—an old mountain man following the road his hands had built, and youth, oblivious to the glory of the sunset.

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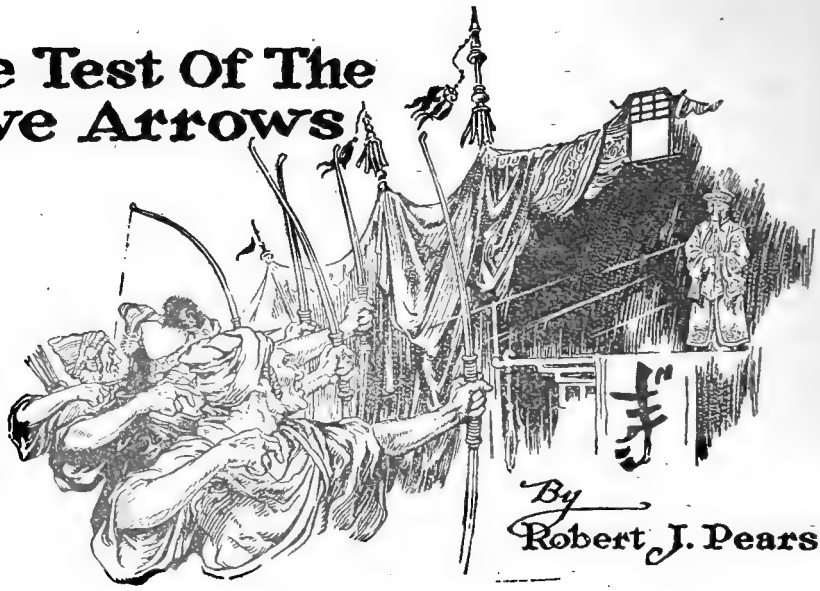
The Test Of The Five Arrows



By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "Silver Sycees," "Ghost-Ruled," etc.

IT WAS with a feeling approaching incredulity that I lay by Hazard's side on top of the cliff overhanging the narrow pass known as the Lolos' Gullet and watched the long line of camels wind away into the sunset. A feeling, indeed, which matched well the blurring uncertainty of the dusk that was slowly settling over the Great Cold Mountains.

Of course, that spirit of doubt was largely parented by an almost complete lack of knowledge of what was around us or before us. And yet I found other excuses for myself—a succession of things unprecedented even in our unprecedented quest.

The beginning had been strange enough, the tracing of the devious intelligence named Koshinga — master of the Chinese Ko Lao Hui and world-menace—to this land which is so little known that not even fables are written about it. The vague tale we'd shortly heard of Koshinga's plan to bring under the Ko Lao Hui yoke the never before subjected Lolos, lords of all the mountains of Northwestern Yunnan, had heaped up the measure. And it had been rather too much when, having news of that camel caravan which fitted in so well with the story, I all at once found myself hurried by Hazard into following it.

The careful disguise and the swift packing, the secret departure from Yunnan-fu, the hurried trip to this mountain pass through which our maps told us the caravan must travel if it were really to enter China's Forbidden Land, and our long wait here—through all this my impression of following the trail of the impossible had persisted.

By his voice, even matter-of-fact Hazard seemed to share this feeling. Remaining motionless, with his head projecting a little over the face of the black cliff, and watching the sponge-footed beasts of burden unwinkingly with his student's eyes, he ventured in a half-whisper:

"We're seeing something, Partridge, that's never been seen before. 'The land where the Chinese go not willingly'—that truthful description of Lololand seems to end today. How can one account for it, except as we have accounted for it?"

"Well," I began, "it's difficult——"

"And," interrupted Hazard, "everything corroborates our theory. The drivers of the camels, I mean, and their loads. Or am I mistaken? Do you notice anything peculiar about them?"

I had noticed it; but I don't know that I should have mentioned it, if it had been left to myself. There was something relentless about Hazard's spirit of inquiry that, once aroused, would have led him on unshod feet to the end of the world.

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As for me, I do not think I lack courage; but perhaps my lesser concentration on the end permits me to see more clearly the perils along the way. However, there was no avoiding the clear answer to Hazard's question.

"Well, yes," I replied. "For one thing, they're not regular camel-drivers. They haven't the regular camel-driver's two-mile-an-hour pace. See, they're forever gaining on the camels, and then dropping back again.

"Then they're too alert and erect. Camel-driving is a hereditary occupation, and the driver's a type—and these men aren't that type.

"As for their loads, I'd say they were wooden boxes muffled in canvas. By their small size and the gait of the camels, their contents are very heavy."

"Add all that," said Hazard slowly, "to the fact that camels are seldom or never seen here, that these have undoubtedly come down from Shensi, where we know Koshinga is slowly gathering munitions of war, and that only a necessity for secrecy would have prevented their loads from being transferred to the ponies which are the natural means of locomotion here.

"Add the further fact that only the lack of firearms, which the Chinese have always prevented them from getting, have hindered the Lolos from conquering all this country; that therefore a gift of arms would be Koshinga's natural bribe for their leaders; and, besides, that Koshinga would want them armed if they're to become his servants.

"Consider these things, and aren't those drivers Koshinga's men as clearly as if they wore the Ko Lao Hui ceremonial robes?"

"I suppose so," I replied without eagerness.

"And, as clearly as though the boxes were transparent, they contain rifles and ammunition. Almost certainly, the same kind of rifles we found in that Ko Lao Hui rendezvous in Shensi. And yet I don't see——"

HAZARD'S voice trailed off doubtfully, and very thoughtfully he followed the last of the grotesque and sluggishly moving beasts—almost as alien in that land as ourselves—as it rounded a curve in the ribbon-like trail below us and passed out of sight. Presently the sound of the tiny bells, which hung on the head-pieces of the animals, died away also; and, except for a pheasant that whirred away somewhere below us, and three black birds of the vulture type that circled slowly and stiffly above us in the darkening sky, Hazard and I seemed altogether alone in a very desolate world.

A world which, indeed, appeared quite unfitted for man's habitation, ragged and scoriac, black peaks piled on black peaks, looking as if but recently upflung from an inferno. A forbidding and depressing world, which was, however, but the eastern curve of the natural ramparts within which the Lolos, those last barbarians to remain unconquered and unassimilated, have hidden themselves for many centuries.

Recalling the little that we'd heard of the land beyond those ramparts—a land, by all accounts, of warring clans, of fertile valleys and fortified villages and feudal castles, of lords and overlords and *nzemos* and Chinese serfs and slaves—I was glad of the uncharacteristic indecision of Hazard's manner.

"You were saying—" I suggested.

"—that I don't at all see our way in the matter. To go in any farther would seem—well, close to suicide. Then the camels will travel all night—it's their time for traveling, on account of the flies."

He roused himself, and, still thoughtfully, got to his feet, an action which I imitated. We made a strange picture for each other, in our long, brown felt cloaks and blue cotton vests and breeches, with rusty old curved sabers hanging from our leather baldrics, and with the turbans we'd bought along with the rest of this outfit in Yunnanfu twisted to a peak on top of our heads to imitate the Lolo "horn." Hazard's face, tinged dark brown by the juices of some useful plant, broke into a serious smile as he regarded me.

"My word, Partridge, there's as small a difference as the ethnologists say between the Lolo features and the Caucasian. If my masquerade is as good as yours, we should get by till we had to talk."

"That's likely to be a fatal limit."

"Yes, that's true. I can understand their lingo well enough, but as to twisting my tongue Lolo fashion—it's hopeless. On the other hand, there's Koshinga ahead."

"If one could be sure of that," I said reluctantly, for by now the pursuit of that illusive fantom had come to be an obsession

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with both of us, "there's no chance too great to take."

"This time there's little doubt of it," replied Hazard. "It would take Koshinga with all his powers to consolidate the Lolo clans and satisfy the demands they make of a leader. And their allegiance would be worth— Listen!" he broke off.

There was coming from the pass below a sound of slow hoof-beats, and of men singing unrhythmically to the accompaniment of a badly played flute. Hazard and I went back to the edge of the cliff and again peered over it.

A dozen Lolos, mounted on wiry, sure-footed little ponies, were following in the wake of the camel caravan. It was such a group as we'd seen several times before, muscular, well set up, taller on the average than white men, with European features, and yet with something of the Indian about them. Indeed, I remember thinking, give them a war-bonnet each or a plume of feathers and what magnificent redskins they would make!

As there was nothing new in the sight of them, so there was nothing new in the song they were half-chanting, half-speaking, jerking it out in a variety of rude cadences. It might really be called the national song of the Lolos, for all have known it for centuries, and have never known any other. There was much in it of Lolo character and history—and something else, too, that had made me think of the chantey the moment I'd heard of Koshinga's ambition to dominate them:

"Free rides the Lolo,
Owing no master, bowing not the head;
Free rides the Lolo,
Bending the backs of those that oppose him—
They shall his slaves be.

"In the high mountains,
Each man his kingdom, each man a warrior,
Testing with arrows,
Five arrows of death, those that would rule him—
No man shall rule him.

"But in a thousand years,
Then there may come one greater than man is,
One who withstands death,
Searching out, smelling out, enemies hidden—
Seeing the unseen.

"Then shall the Lolos
Come from the mountains, follow this Great One,
Down where the world lies,
Down where the fat and the wealth of the world lies—
Soft for the white steel."

AS THE song died away in the distance, Hazard and I looked at each other, and I saw my own thought reflected in his eyes. There'd been an unusual note in the powerful voices of the Lolos, a note of tense and challenging excitement. If they were indeed on their way to the trial of a dangerous pretender to authority who offered them a great adventure at the great price of their liberty—well, they might be expected to sing in just such a way.

"Um!" muttered Hazard. "'Five arrows of death.' And 'seeing the unseen.' What do you know about that rigmarole, Partridge?"

"Well, it can hardly be called a rigmarole. It has meaning enough—that is, if one believes the Chinese story that about a dozen aspirants to authority over the Lolos have come to their deaths trying to pass the tests it mentions.

"Just what those tests are nobody seems to know, except that so far they've proved impossible. But with Koshinga it may be different."

"Yes," agreed Hazard, "with Koshinga it may be different. Well, let's go down to our ponies."

I acquiesced; and we started down the roundabout trail up which we had climbed to our point of observation. Near the bottom of it we came upon our ponies tethered where we had hidden them; and we led them down into the pass. During this procedure Hazard surprized me with a seemingly irrelevant remark:

"Speaking of tests, have you ever felt that there's something inadequate in the ordinary explanation of the Boxer invulnerability to firearms? I mean the exhibitions their leaders used to give, and will probably give again.

"There were some darn intelligent men fooled by the trick, or Chinese history lies. Seems to me the stunt of extracting the bullets before the shot, or never putting them in, would have been easily detected. Then there would have been the fatal flaw that a suspicious spectator could merely have insisted on the substitution of his own gun—and away would have gone both the superstition and the teacher of it, together."

I replied truly that I'd sometimes had that thought. In fact it was a matter that I intended fully to investigate if I lived

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through the struggle with the Ko Lao Hui. But just then we came to the bottom of the pass, and face to face with decision.

We were not so far into the Lolo country but that we could turn back and spend at least the latter part of the night in a Chinese inn. On the other hand, if we were to go forward we must camp the night where we were, for our disguises would not serve us in the dark, and we would surely be challenged. So we debated the matter, the lure of Koshinga and of the unknown matching discretion and common sense, until presently I saw Hazard start and gaze fixedly at the ground just in front of me.

There was a knife there—a short knife shaped like a dagger. I picked it up quickly, and we examined it together. We examined it for a full minute in fascinated silence, though one glance had served us to recognize it.

For on the handle of the knife was engraved that which was really a symbol of authority among the Ko Lao Hui, permitted by their laws to be in the possession only of those holding high rank in the society—an exact likeness of the man Koshinga, as he had been prophesied in that dim past in which the Ko Lao Hui was formed.

There was no mistaking that powerful, deracialized, and very nearly dehumanized face; and so, while Hazard and I stared at it, our half-conviction of what had been planned for Lololand changed into certainty.

"Of course," I said rather huskily, "it was dropped by the camel caravan."

"Of course," agreed Hazard.

"It was a peculiar accident, their happening to drop it just where we would be almost sure to find it."

"If it was an accident," doubted Hazard.

"Well, what then?"

Hazard didn't reply, and, looking at him, I questioned whether he had heard me. His almost commonplace face—the best mask I ever knew for the subtlest wits I've ever encountered—gave no clue to his thoughts, but I knew from past experience what that silence meant. Somehow he had fallen upon a thought that might mean action, perhaps upon a working hypothesis of our antagonist's plans.

He was playing with all the known elements of the situation as a juggler might play with balls, tossing them up, observing them, mingling them into each other with incredible rapidity, testing whether or not they would fit into that thought.

It was an eccentricity of his that I respected, and that most keen minds and all good chess-players will understand—of liking thus to mull matters over in secrecy, to plan his moves ahead without the distraction of confidences.

But when he finally spoke, it was in an entirely colorless voice:

"Well, Partridge, I leave it up to you. There's no doubt the danger ahead of us is as great as the importance of this project is to Koshinga; and that can't be exaggerated. But for all that, there's a weakness in Koshinga's position that might be made fatal—that is, if a certain idea I have proves true."

"What troubles me," I said, "is this: Will we ever find the place of Koshinga's rendezvous with the Lolos, even if we do go on? The camels leave no trail on these rocks, and we don't know what's beyond this pass."

"That was bothering me too, up to a minute ago," said Hazard.

"And now——"

"Now I'm pretty sure we'll find it," with the slightest touch of eagerness.

I read his desire, and in truth it squared with my own; nor did I care to trouble him with curiosity concerning an idea, which must as yet be only nebulous. But there was no escaping the lure of Koshinga's challenge—if indeed the knife were a challenge. And if Hazard's last-expressed belief were true, then we should at least have a chance at Koshinga; and for such a chance either of us was willing to risk our lives many times.

"Well, then," I said rather weariedly, for that had been but the last of several hard days, "since we'll have to do sentry-go tonight let's pick a place to camp."

II

IT WAS a very guarded rest we took that night, in a ravine across the mouth of which we scattered many wooden pegs, their poisonous points upward, a safeguard we'd learned from the Lolos themselves. But the morning came without incident, and after breakfasting on canned stuff from our pony packs we began a silent and watchful journey.

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Silent and watchful, for, of course, if the knife had really been dropped in our path by design, it proved that we were being followed by the Ko Lao Hui; and nowhere was the ground on either side of us so clear that it might not have hidden an enemy.

Indeed, sometimes the walls of the pass closed in until our knees brushed the rocks on either side of it. There were many such places; it was like passing through a succession of doors into another world.

Hazard led the way with a short rein and with his right hand always free to grip the revolver which was thrust into the lining of his cloak. His quick, microscopic eyes continually searched the walls of the pass ahead of us; but for all his sharp sight I felt I wouldn't give much for our chances in case of an ambush. I began to hope most fervently that he really had some sound foundation for his belief that we would live to reach the unknown place of rendezvous ahead of us.

This continual anticipation of a spear crashing into me from above, or an arrow winging me from the side, did much to neutralize the pleasant sense of traveling where, in all probability, no white man had ever traveled before. This sense of itself is quite the most delicious sensation I know of; it's as if some magic spell had dissolved the limits which have been hitherto set to foot and eye.

Presently the walls of the pass began to slope back less steeply. Now they became covered with a dense growth of underbrush, above which rose giant rhododendrons, thirty feet high, covered with red and white bloom. There were rosy azaleas, too; and from the occasional beech and pine trees mossy lianas hung like garlands. We'd passed Lololand's outer ramparts and come into a very beautiful country; but I had too much on my mind to enjoy it very much.

Particularly I was wondering just what Hazard was expecting to happen—for that he was expecting and watching for something else than the chance of sudden death was plainly evident. Nearly inscrutable as was his face, I knew him well enough to read that.

And now I began to wish that I'd displayed more curiosity concerning his half-utterances back where we'd found the knife. Frankly, I'd been too tired for curiosity; and I'd had so much experience of his ability that I was still content to follow his lead; but I didn't like this traveling blindfolded into the unknown.

But very probably, I told myself, he'd had only a flash of divination then, a partial glimpse of what was ahead of us. If that were true, his air of confident expectancy indicated that he'd completed his surmise and proved it to his own satisfaction at least.

This was with him always a rather complicated process of sorting facts, sifting out improbabilities, building up complete riddles from the smallest fragments and then solving them by swift logic—but mainly, I think, of projecting himself subjectively into other men's minds. In this case, of course, into the mind of our enemy, Koshinga.

That last feat really requires a peculiar gift; often as I'd tried it myself, I'd succeeded only in placing myself in the other man's position—which is an entirely different matter.

At present, for instance, though I went patiently over all the elements in the case—Koshinga's project of converting the Lolos into Ko Lao Hui and so dominating them; their peculiar requirements for leadership as indicated by the song we'd heard; the caravan which presumably carried Koshinga's dangerous gift to them; and the grotesquely ugly knife bearing the Ko Lao Hui symbol which Hazard and I had found—piece these things together as I would, it only became more evident that we were two easy dupes advancing foolishly into a very apparent trap.

And the next incident of our journey fitted equally well into either the theory of Hazard's prophetic foresight or my own pessimistic deductions—until an occurrence a little later threw it heavily into the wrong balance.

For of a sudden Hazard drew up his pony sharply, and, with his eyes narrowing and a half-smile on his lean face, leaned forward, intently studying the underbrush to the right of the trail ahead of us.

I followed his look, but for a moment could see nothing. Then I caught the slightest possible movement of the top of the underbrush. Some one was creeping through that underbrush, down toward the trail. Of course, my one thought was of a Ko Lao Hui ambush; and, coming up beside Hazard, I drew my revolver from under my cloak.

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Hazard already had his in his hand, but——

"Don't shoot," he whispered peremptorily.

I glanced at him in natural-enough surprize, but the next moment saw some reason in his injunction. A man dressed in the ragged and faded blue garments of a Chinese coolie, who was evidently unaware of our presence, wormed out of the brush until his body lay half-across the trail.

Then he turned on his side, revealing an intelligent but ugly-looking face, and glanced furtively up the trail until he saw us. He emitted an inarticulate cry, and, his yellow features twisting with seeming terror, made as if to squirm hastily back into the bushes.

At that, Hazard seemed about to disobey his own command; his revolver flashed down on the man.

"Stop!" he cried in Yunnanese.

It appeared to me strange even then that the man made no greater effort to get away. To him we were, or should have been, Lolos; and death rather than slavery is the usual fate of unauthorized Chinese found in Lolo territory. But he groveled on the ground until we came up to him; and then, at Hazard's command, got to his feet cringingly and went off into a half-hysterical plea for mercy.

He was in the middle of it, and I'd supplemented my first distrust of him by a closer view of his cunning-looking face, and also by the reflection that his long, talon-like finger-nails proved his coolie's garb to be a masquerade, when Hazard did something that amazed me. He tossed back the corner of his cloak, pushed up the sleeve of his jacket, and showed him his white arm.

"SEE, we are *yang whan*. The *han ren* has nothing to fear from us. Now will you tell us why you are here?"

And the next moment, with harsh ejaculations of rage against the Lolos, with shrill-voiced lamentations, with many quotations from the classics concerning the duties of younger brothers, the Chinaman was pouring out his story—which was as plausible a yarn as he or one shrewder than he could possibly have contrived to explain his presence in these forbidden hills.

His name—he introduced himself—was Shen Yun. His elder brother had been chief magistrate of the village of Ki-Liang. On an evil day his brother had been traveling toward Yunnan-fu, when the coarse-haired savages of the mountains had come upon him and carried him and his servants off into the hills and made them into slaves, which was the way of the Lolos.

And Shen Yun had sworn by Mencius, teacher of Confucian truths, that he would follow his brother into the mountains and either rescue him or pass to join their father. But, having made this resolve, Shen Yun had waited patiently until wisdom should come to him. And five days ago the wind of gossip had brought him a story which told him how to proceed.

He had heard of a great gathering of all the Lolo *nzemos*, and the day and place of it, and heard, too, that the chiefs would bring servants according to their ranks. Was it not likely that his brother, being no common man, would have been made into a servant rather than a toiler in the fields? Was it not likely that he would find him at that gathering? Shen Yun put these questions to us anxiously.

"Your wisdom is as great as your sense of fraternal duty," replied Hazard. "And clearly Heaven shines upon both, and upon the poor efforts of your servants, in bringing us together. We also would go to this gathering, only we know not the way. You shall be as our slave and show us the way, so we may both go quickly."

Now, if Shen Yun's story was true, that arrangement was proper enough—but there was something wrong. For one thing, the meeting was too convenient to be natural. The story matched our own desires too closely—and the longer I observed him the more I suspected that Shen Yun concealed some twisted intention behind his now bland and smiling face. Hazard's easy credulity amazed me, and I started to remonstrate in English:

"Think what you're doing, Hazard. We'd be completely in his power; he'd only have to raise his voice——"

"T'ong sing! (Be careful!)" from Hazard.

Hazard had pinched the flank of his pony, and ejaculated this sharply as it started ahead. It was evidently a warning, and it told me that Hazard at least suspected Shen Yun of concealing a knowledge of English. Then I remembered my feeling that Hazard had been anticipating some such meeting as this, and decided to let him have his way.

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So very shortly we were on our way again, with Shen Yun trudging along on foot behind us, in the eyes of Lololand our slave. When presently the pass broke up into three trails, it became evident that our meeting with him had been even more opportune than I'd suspected. The trail he bade us take divided and subdivided again in labyrinthine fashion, and without his leadership we should, of course, have been hopelessly bewildered. As it was, I felt we were merely lost in the morasses of treasonable counsel.

Now we were entering the true Lolo world, but we got only a glimpse of it. We passed indeed through two fertile valleys filled with fields of yellow maize and green rice and golden rape, in which Chinese men and women worked in sullen silence, their heads down.

At a distance we saw several fortified villages, their houses in little parallel streets, like military barracks, with the great house of the *nzemo* always in the center. In the passes between these prison-like valleys there were always a few Lolo warders—savage-looking men enough, armed mainly with bows and arrows.

But with them were also Chinese, and there were armed Chinese in the fields, too—men who had been made into serfs and watchers over their fellow Chinese after the third generation of slavery. It was a curious system, well fitted to the comfort of the Lolos, and reminiscent of the world when it was very, very young.

Once a band of Lolos with rattling sabers, serfs armed with long lances and bearing their masters' bows and quivers, and unarmed slaves, dashed past us at full gallop, with the barbaric voices of the Lolos raised high in that rude and challenging song of theirs. And once, as we came opposite a group which, squatted by the side of a pass, were making a meal on their great, flat cakes of mysterious ingredients, I caught a few words of their talk.

"All clans are on the road today," said one.

"It is an evil thing," grunted another. "Each clan to itself is the way of freedom. For what but strife were men given fists?"

"But this will be a greater strife, and he that is to be tested has promised the Lolos leadership. Also there is the prophecy."

"Also," chuckled a third, "there are the five arrows. Clearly it was intended that death should come——"

I heard no more of it, but I thought I could complete the sentence. Clearly it was intended that death should come to any man pretending to authority over the Lolos. Well, I hoped that the man was right, but he did not know Koshinga.

But what I had heard gave me a new and rather frightful thought. What fit leaders indeed those Lolos, who went to their fighting as Mussulmans to their prayers, would make for the yellow horde with which Koshinga hoped one day to swamp the world!

THE road twisted and turned, divided and divided again, with Shen Yun ever directing us from behind. Finally we came to a place from which we could see far to the north, across a green country corrugated with low ridges—the great sacred mountain of the Lolos, Chonolevo, the Mountain of the Dragon's Head.

To the west, still farther away, there was a range of still more majestic mountains, their flanks precipitous and bare—the horizon wall of Tibet. When Shen Yun first assumed his doubtful leadership he had mentioned this place. We were very near our journey's end.

Now we descended into a deep ravine, which seemed to narrow and come to an end ahead of us. Very near this apparent end of it, there were perhaps half a dozen mounted Lolos. When we were within two hundred yards of them, they started toward us on a gallop.

There was a businesslike directness about their movements that left no doubt as to their intentions. We'd come to the end of our easy traveling; at last we were to be challenged.

Hazard, as usual, was in the lead; but Shen Yun had come almost abreast of me. As the Lolos approached us, I shot him a sidewise glance.

The dreadful suspicion that inspired that glance was really only half-formed; but the next instant it was turned into certainty, and my immediate fear of the Lolo guard was relieved by confirmation of all my other fears. As the Lolos drew up in front of us, Shen Yun lifted his left hand and passed it with a circular movement around his heart—clearly a secret sign to them.

The Lolo horsemen wheeled and galloped back to the gateway they had been set to

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guard. And we went on. Of course there was nothing else to do. But I'm afraid that my observation was somewhat misted by terror for the next few minutes, for my first impressions of that rock-bound amphitheater that lay on the other side of that natural gateway, at the end of the ravine, are still somewhat vague.

In fact, my great impression was that of a trap. The walls that surrounded that amphitheater, which was some hundreds of yards across, were bare and almost vertical, broken only around the base by the accumulated rubble of the ages. Only, at the farther end that wall sloped back steeply in a chaos of shattered rocks; but that possible avenue of escape was blocked by a great wooden platform, with its interior carpeted, curtained and canopied with some sort of black cloth. Before that mysteriously-suggestive platform perhaps a hundred Lolos were seated in a semicircle—doubtless the leaders of their people. To their right, near the edge of the cup-like amphitheater, was a second smaller platform, like a great table. Just to the left of the entrance were massed the Chinese slaves that Shen Yun had prophesied—I estimated two for each Lolo—while directly across the amphitheater from them, regarding us with a suggestion of malevolence in their ugly faces, were the camels whose sinister loads had been our first lures to this place.

And near the camels lay the loads revealed—a dozen wooden packing-boxes, now unswathed of canvas and with their tops ripped off, so that potential death in the shape of many rifles and many bandoleers of ammunition peeped over their edges. Lying near these boxes, guarding them, were about twice their number of Chinese, the camel-drivers and others, each man unquestionably a Ko Lao Hui.

In the dead, anticipative silence that hung over the whole place, I saw these things, and saw, too, how the eyes of every one present were fixed tensely on the gloomy-looking platform at the farther end of the place. I dismounted with Hazard and followed his example in turning my pony over to Shen Yun. Still holding to his rôle of servant, he led the ponies over to where some hundreds of others were tethered. When he was out of ear-shot I turned savagely upon Hazard.

"Hazard," I whispered, "we're lost. Shen Yun——"

Did I fancy that he smiled, and that, as nearly as his sharp-featured, composed face ever revealed any of his thoughts, it now revealed an incredible satisfaction with the situation?

"Shen Yun is a Ko Lao Hui." He completed my sentence calmly. "I knew it. That was why I took him for a guide."

I stared at him with a feeling of hopelessness that I should ever understand him.

"Of course," he said; "it was obvious. The dagger was a lure; Shen Yun was a lure; and I wouldn't be surprised if it was Koshinga who saw to it that we should get the news of the camel caravan. From the first he played to get us to this place."

"And into his power," I replied rather bitterly. "And you played into his hand."

"But not," said Hazard gravely, "without knowing the strength of his hand, and its weakness, too. Forgive me, Partridge, but there hasn't been a time since my suspicions were corroborated—that is, since Shen Yun joined us—that I dared talk to you.

"But don't you see we've really been in Koshinga's power ever since we entered the Lolo country? He'd only to pass the word to the Lolos; white men masquerading as Lolos would get short shrift. It's his other object that I'm playing on."

"His other object?"

"Don't you see it?"

Hazard was speaking very swiftly now.

"The song we heard; the double test to which the Lolos are going to hold Koshinga, and which, by the way, he's going to pass. The first is plain, of course, the test of the five arrows—which, by the way, I think is going to confirm our doubt as to the insufficiency of the usual explanation of the Boxer leaders' immunity to bullets. But as to the second test, the test of the invisible——"

HAZARD looked over his shoulder and broke off in the middle of his sentence.

"Shen Yun's coming, there's no time for anything but the next step; but if I'm right about that— And there's something I want you to do.

"When Shen Yun goes to look for his brother among that bunch of slaves—which of course he'll have to do to keep

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up his pretense—we'll go with him. And I want you to walk between me and Shen Yun.

"Then I'll slip away; I've something to say to the slaves. But you stick close to Shen Yun; and when he gets through with his make-believe search, I'll join you. And then——"

"Yes; then," I put in, "we'll be finished. We can't mix with the Lolos, and we can't stay with the slaves. We've agreed our disguises won't stand close inspection, and——"

"Then Shen Yun will help us out," said Hazard.

"What!" I cried bewilderedly. "Shen Yun, who is Koshinga's man!"

"Shen Yun, who is Koshinga's man," repeated Hazard, "will continue to take care of us. He'll point out to us the necessity of concealment, and supply that concealment. Why? It should be easy enough to understand now——"

"Of course," I said thoughtfully, "if Koshinga *has* another purpose for bringing us here than just killing us——"

"You have it. He'll keep us alive till that purpose is accomplished. Moreover—But here's Shen Yun. Now, Shen Yun—" Hazard turned to him— "we will make the search for your honorable brother."

Since my own reasoning followed his that far without in the least discovering hope of escape, it neither surprized nor encouraged me that Hazard's forecast as to Shen Yun's next move worked out exactly. Shen Yun made his fruitless search for a non-existent brother—worried a little, I could see, at Hazard's temporary escape from his surveillance—and then told us the rather obvious lie that during that search he had also inquired for and discovered a hiding-place for us.

It was a niche behind the broken fragments of rock that lined the left wall of the amphitheater, half-way between the entrance and the stage-like platform at the other end. There was a sort of crevice in the rubble just behind the ponies which, deepening as we went along until we were able to move almost upright, led us to that niche. Shen Yun, of course, went along with us.

So far as we could tell, our departure was unnoticed, which was hardly remarkable, considering the strained attention with which every one was regarding the platform upon which Koshinga was presumably to appear. That is, every one except the Chinese slaves.

From the moment of our passage through it, there had been a curious agitation in that group, and it had hummed and droned increasingly with subdued, guttural voices. I'd have given that phenomenon more thought had not my attention been distracted by another evidence of our own most certain doom.

I pretended not to notice that the niche in which we stood had evidently been fitted to receive us, that the bottom of it had recently been hollowed out, and that even the sparse shrubbery through which, ourselves unseen, we could view the entire amphitheater, had been no longer than a few hours before thrust into the ground. And, after all, it meant nothing—nothing more than I already knew—that the will of Shen Yun, who had brought us here, was Koshinga's will, and that Koshinga's will was our death.

III

Koshinga, that monstrous egotism, that specter-like devil-man—doubtless damned and doomed in the end, as utterly evil things are ever doomed—but for the present a triumphant Colossus whose shadow lay as a blight the length and breadth of China. Koshinga, spawned as it were in an evil prophecy, bred in the gloom of the past, who'd burst upon the somewhat chaotic present a full-formed leader of all that was vicious and backward-looking in struggling New China, master of the criminal *tu fei*, master of the Ko Lao Hui, preacher of racial hatred and world conquest, deluder of the ignorant, oppressor of the poor, robber of the rich.

And, topping all that, Koshinga the illusive, working his will by brute force and tricks and charlatanry always behind a yellow cloud of his followers, so that Hazard and I in eight months' search had attained his presence but once, and that at his own volition.

Such was the man for whom we waited, and such the man who hoped for his own ends to attain dominion over the Lolos. Now I could see that semicircle of them, that represented all the authority of their scattered clans, more plainly—warriors and

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savages all, Herculean of form, wild of features.

All of them were intent, but I thought it a reluctant intentness; most of the faces I could see wore scowls, and a certain faint hope came to me as I thought of their hard-bitten rage if Koshinga failed to endure whatever ordeal they had set for him.

That hope passed quickly as I recalled certain other things Koshinga had done, in the doing of which he had seemed to rise above the limitations of mere flesh; but another hope followed it—one which made it seem possible that the next few minutes, which seemed so likely to be the last and the most illuminating of Hazard's life and my own, might also be the most useful.

I turned to Hazard and saw that Shen Yun had for some reason drawn a little away from us, down the way we had come. And I whispered:

"Perhaps it's well after all, Hazard—well that we came here. For if Koshinga comes out on that platform— It's long pistol-range, but——"

It seemed to me that the slightest of smiles again curved Hazard's compressed lips.

"Well?"

"We should be able to bring him down, between us. We'd have a chance, anyway."

"It is long range."

Hazard squinted over the distance.

"It would be only a chance. Now, if Koshinga didn't know we were here—or if you didn't know that he knew it—what would you advise then?"

"Why, in that case," I said, "I'd advise waiting and trying to get closer. For of course if we fire and miss it's all off. But——"

"Yes," said Hazard; "that's what we'd do if we knew no more than Koshinga thinks we know. And in that case we'd never get any closer, which twin facts are one reason Koshinga allows us to get so close.

"But there's another, too. Consider what you know of him, and tell me if you think Koshinga would take even the fraction of a chance of our firing at him at this range, if he were—well, hittable."

"Why, what do you mean?"

It was a queer feeling that came over me then, for I knew what he meant.

"Remember, the Boxer *tong* and the Ko Lao Hui are really the same. And if arrows won't— *Ah!*"

Hazard's exclamation was but the echo of a subdued and almost frightened gasp that broke upon the death-like silence of the place like the stirring of a wind. It started from the Lolos immediately in front of the platform and spread back in a swift rush of sound through the Ko Lao Hui munition-guard, and even through the queerly excited and tense Chinese slaves.

As for me, I heard that sound, but I don't know whether I joined in it or not. Probably I did; for even while I was talking to Hazard I'd kept one eye on the dark-curtained platform, and so I saw a thing that was almost as impossible as Hazard's impossible suggestion.

For Koshinga had suddenly appeared upon that stage he had prepared for himself. He had appeared, I say; one instant the stage was empty, the next instant he was standing upon it—an apparition full formed out of the clear air before our very eyes.

An enormous figure clad in a yellow robe that was like a flame against the solid blackness of the platform—a figure that fairly radiated light, and yet one which was, for some curious reason, unconvincing and wraith-like. But it was Koshinga unmistakably—and this time no black mask covered his face.

"My God!" I whispered to Hazard. "It's—it's true. It's the same——"

By the slight tremor of his voice, even Hazard's equanimity seemed to be disturbed by that apparition.

"It seems to be. Well——"

For—though it seemed madness to believe it—the countenance that topped that gigantic figure was the same, line for line, as the terrible visage that marred the handle of the dagger we had found. Line for line, it matched that ancient design, that ancient prophecy, made more than three hundred years ago by the first Koshinga, the founder of the Ko Lao Hui.

Line for line, it was the face of the man who, he had foretold, would come to rule the Ko Lao Hui, and China, and ultimately the world—a prophecy which that first founder had indeed contrived his best to make come true by a very curious process of breeding. But all along Hazard and I had fought against the belief that that evil conception had been realized—and now the fact itself seemed forced upon us.

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"Listen! Can you hear him?" whispered Hazard.

In the death-like stillness that followed hard upon his appearance Koshinga had begun to speak. At first his words were nearly indistinguishable at that distance, but the roll of his powerful voice, dreadful in its monotony and lack of inflection, reached us well enough.

I'd heard it once before, and even then it had suggested the graveyard; it had been like a voice speaking over the long centuries from an ancient sepulcher. But—and I remember even then noting that fact as a curious one—now that graveyard quality seemed to be increased. His words seemed to have something of the actual physical properties of an echo, as if they came up and were reflected from some unimaginable depth.

PRESENTLY, whether it was because his voice gained power or because my ears grew accustomed to the weird sound, I was able to understand him. I followed him through deft and flattering references to the history of all the clans that were gathered there—the Nga-gai, the Lomi-Loko, the Alu-Ma, the Atu, the Ashu, and many others.

Then he passed to a eulogy of the Lolo race as a whole, its bravery and its military accomplishments—stroking softly the panther he meant to master at the end. From that it was an easy transition to his offer to them—to make them, in return for their submission, leaders in the unholy war he promised them to wage, military leaders and masters of their ancient enemies, the Chinese.

What, indeed, would better suit the Lolos, who care not whom they fight as long as they are fighting? And what, also, would better suit Koshinga? In the ingrained non-aggressiveness of the Chinese race, which quality was at present making easy the establishment of Koshinga's yoke over them, Hazard and I had long read the one great weakness of Koshinga's scheme.

But the yellow people have also the dangerous gift of coalescence; the mass may be made into a unit and driven like a unit; and the Lolo officers would be Koshinga's harness and reins. As Koshinga passed into a description of his qualifications as super-leader—and, of course, into hyperbole—even my own imagination, which Hazard calls so sluggish, was stirred by the thought of what this day meant to Koshinga.

"I am the One Great One," he was saying in that voice which had grown hypnotic from very monotony. "I am the proof of that which needs no proof, the one that was prophesied, the one that has come. I am He Who Commands and He Who Will Be Obeyed, Mingler of the Bloods, Master of the Kingdom-That-Is-to-Be, whom death can not touch, whose eyes pierce solid rock, whose mind foresees——"

It was a fulsome panegyric; but after all he was only repeating what the Ko Lao Hui had for ten generations been taught to believe of their coming Koshinga, whom he claimed to be. I wondered if it was but a coincidence that the latter two qualifications, which were the only ones susceptible to immediate proof, squared so accurately with the Lolo requirements for leadership.

Whatever other qualities he lacks, the Asiatic at least knows how to plan ahead and wait for results, and it wouldn't be the strangest thing in the history of the Ko Lao Hui society if its founders had themselves sowed the seed of their propaganda in Lolo legend.

However that might be, the present-day Lolo leaders seemed to be rapidly falling under Koshinga's spell. From the intentness with which they listened and the way their bodies leaned forward toward him, I could imagine how their wide lips parted and their savage eyes squinted and their thin, cruel nostrils dilated at the idea of having such a man as he claimed to be as their leader.

But among them their must have been some who resented his assumptions as endangering their own prestige; and at this point in Koshinga's speech one of these barked out:

"The Test! Show us the Test."

Koshinga paused, drawing himself up arrogantly; but the demand was strengthened by other challenging voices, starting up everywhere.

"The Test! The Test of the Five Arrows! The Test of the Seeing Eye! Show us the double test."

I suppose it really wasn't curious that it was at that moment—when, if ever, Koshinga might have been expected to show

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some sign of emotion—that I first realized that his features had been throughout as immobile as yellow parchment. Only his thin lips moved, and his eyes seemed to flame with a more terrible light as he held up his hand for silence.

"Aye, the tests! Gladly will I take the tests, and gladly should you witness them, for only so it will be proved that your prophets have not lied, and that the 'one greater than man' whom they prophesied has come. And that none of you may be hurt by those that would slay me——"

The eager, anticipative murmur that rose among the Lolos at this made me miss the rest of Koshinga's speech; but I saw that one abnormally long arm was extended toward the smaller platform that stood just to the right front of Koshinga's black-curtained stage. With an authoritative gesture he seemed to order some one to mount that platform.

There was a stir among the Lolos; some of them were getting to their feet. But something—I suppose it was Koshinga's words—had given me a new idea, a half-glimpse of the truth that I like to think I should have divined long before had my mind not been bewildered by the strangeness of the whole affair.

I turned to Hazard, and saw with relief that Shen Yun had slipped away somewhere while we'd been intent on the spectacle in front. As for Hazard, the muscles of his face had relaxed a little and he was leaning lightly against the uneven rock surface in front of us in an easy attitude that somehow irritated me.

"Hazard," I whispered tensely, "we've played into Koshinga's hands too far. The second test, the test of the 'invisible enemies'—don't you understand? Why, we're those enemies, Hazard. Let's get away from here, where he's put us——"

"Yes," said Hazard quietly. "I thought you would soon get it. And the fact that Shen Yun's deserted us is another evidence of the scheme, for naturally it wouldn't be part of the game for him to be caught with us.

"But do you fancy he hasn't his eye on us from somewhere? Wherever we go, he'll signal Koshinga.

"But— Look, you're missing something!" he broke off. "Something that I don't understand. And yet, perhaps——"

I looked and saw an amazing thing, but again a thing that I really should have known was coming. Five magnificent Lolo warriors had mounted the smaller platform, each of them bearing a bow nearly as long as his body. Against the taut string of these bows they were already fitting their arrows, and the direction of their glances left no doubt as to their target.

Koshinga's pretension to immortality was to be tested indeed. A child could have hit him at that distance—a child!

AND with that thought came a certain memory that emphasized the seeming deadliness of that test.

"Five arrows!" I murmured to Hazard. "——, I don't understand how he's to escape. Do you remember what we were told, back there in Yunnan-fu—that the Lolos use five different deadly poisons on their arrow-tips?"

"Aconitin, *bashlai*, *catipan*, and two others that I've forgotten," corroborated Hazard. "Yes, it may be that, though it seems to me one poison five times repeated would be as deadly. But the arrows themselves would kill without poison. Partridge, it must be——"

"Mail!" I suggested as his voice trailed off. "Some sort of chain armor that would——"

"Impossible! Just the force of those five arrows, at that distance, would knock down an ox. And besides— But see!"

It was significant of the respect for his powers that Koshinga had forced upon us, that not all our keen desire for his death impelled us to an even momentary hope that we should witness it then. But already the Lolos were bending their bows, their dark faces twisted scowlingly, great ridges of muscle standing out on their powerful arms, clearly advertising by the care with which they aimed and the strength they put into the arrow-pull, the deadly intention of their minds.

So for a moment they stood like figures carved out of rock; and in that moment I do not think that there was a single breath drawn in any one of the four groups in that amphitheater—neither among the Lolos before the platform, nor the Ko Lao Hui guardians of munitions back of them, nor by Hazard or me, who were forgetful for the moment even of the fact that that extraordinary intelligence of Koshinga was

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next to be turned against us; nor by the Chinese slaves who were huddled down there below us.

And then the picked bowmen released their arrows.

Twang! A whistling, hissing sound. Five faint streaks, streaks that were but instant shadows flung upon the air, beginning at the edge of the bowmen's platform and ending at Koshinga's body.

Four of those arrows struck his chest—I would have sworn it. The fifth, more shrewdly aimed, impinged squarely upon his thick throat.

For the fraction of a heart-beat they were even visible, sticking, as it seemed, in his yellow robe and yellow skin; and then they disappeared somehow against the dark background. By the sharp report that came back to us from that dark-curtained platform, the arrows had spent their force and shattered themselves against the wooden frame of it.

The air was still vibrating with that cracking sound and with the gasp that came from every one who witnessed this thing, when Koshinga—who had not even wavered—raised his right hand and called out in an absolutely unchanged voice:

"You have read the lesson; tremble and obey me, who am immortal. Death can not touch me, neither the visible death of the poisonous arrow, nor the invisible death of the *kwei tsu's* (foreign devil's) talking tubes. I hear the unheard and see the invisible, even the invisible faces of my enemies; I smell out my enemies and the enemies of Lololand; I smell——"

His immobile face, empty of all possibility of good, evil incarnate, had turned our way. His eyes were staring straight at the rampart of rock and tangled shrubbery behind which we were hiding. With craning necks and excited faces and credulous eyes that saw nothing but that rampart, the Lolos, leaping to their feet, were following that look.

And I, with the certainty of Koshinga's triumph and our doom upon me, and yet with something of unreasonable hope, too, turned to Hazard, who had foreseen this thing.

"Come!" breathed Hazard sharply, jerking me down the runway of rocks the way we had come.

"But there's no escape," I argued against my hope; "there's no escape. Here's the place to fight. We're going straight into the open, straight into their arms."

"There's always escape," said Hazard. "And we're going straight to the Chinese slaves, and straight to the arms of the Ko Lao Hui."

I suppose I was very much confused. The long suspense under which I'd been held had had its effect; the seeming miracle of the thing I'd just witnessed still befuddled my mind; and the piercing cries and clashing arms of the Lolos as, urged by Koshinga, they broke into a wild rush for the place where we'd been hidden, made coherent thought impossible.

So it was not until we'd burst into the mass of shuffling Chinese, hesitant upon the brink of their greatest adventure, that I understood the meaning of Hazard's words.

But with that understanding came, of course, the realization of what Hazard had been doing among those Chinese while he had been separated from Shen Yun and me, just after we'd entered the amphitheater.

"I wanted to tell you," Hazard found time to gasp to me apologetically. "But it was the vital point, and rocks have ears."

Across the amphitheater the Ko Lao Hui, still watching over the guns that were to have armed the Lolos, were staring unguardedly at the Lolo rush. Since Hazard's talk with them the enslaved Chinese had had the time which their race always requires to work themselves up to mutiny and a fighting pitch.

They were already surging toward the guns when we reached them; and a moment later the Ko Lao Hui—men of their own race, indeed, but standing in the way of freedom—died very suddenly.

IV

THE Lolos, utterly confused by this unexplainable action on the part of their slaves, turned in disorder just as they reached the far side of the amphitheater. They paused and hesitated fatally. For that pause gave Hazard and me time to throw ourselves flat behind two ammunition-cases, to seize a rifle each, and to rip open two bandoleers of cartridges.

So close was the shave that if the rifles had not been of a familiar type, the type we'd seen in the Ko Lao Hui rendezvous

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in Shensi, we might have been lost while we fumbled with the mechanism. But as it was we opened fire upon the Lolos just as they started against us.

The Chinese, of course, spurred by their imagination of what they could perform with the white man's marvelous "talking tubes," had achieved their greatest usefulness. Perhaps half a dozen were able to catch the meaning of the hasty explanations Hazard and I flung at them, and these at least added to the volume of our fire.

The majority merely wrestled with their weapons, failing even to get the cartridges into place, which was for the most part a fortunate failure. A few were hit by the Lolo arrows; and then the desire for self-preservation came upon them all, and they flung themselves flat behind the convenient ammunition-cases.

But Hazard and I emptied our magazines as fast as we could work the bolts, and there was no reason that either of us should miss a shot. It was close-range work, against men who had no idea of modern firearms, who, when panic came upon them, huddled behind each other for protection, not knowing that the same bullet would penetrate four in a row.

It was murderous work indeed, work that I didn't like; but there was no help for it. I consoled myself with the thought that Hazard and I were fighting for more than our own lives—for the destruction of Koshinga's power in Lololand.

And with that thought came the thought of Koshinga himself, and a guilty sinking of my heart that I'd forgotten him for even a moment. The incipient rush of the Lolos was already broken; the hasty shower of arrows they'd loosed had dwindled away; panic terror of our magic arms had seized them; and already they were breaking for the ravine that was the one exit from the place.

As I jammed home my fourth cartridge-clip I looked for Koshinga, certain that he would have disappeared. And, instead, I saw him.

His position on the platform had shifted a little; he had moved over toward our end of it. His great, yellow-clad figure appeared even a little more shadowy and unsubstantial-looking against its somber background.

But if his terrible face had changed by even the bending of a line or a shading of expression, I couldn't perceive it. That immutability of features, as he looked down upon the destruction of his plans and all that turbulence, suggested again, most strongly, the omnipotence he had claimed and the invulnerability he had seemingly demonstrated.

The winds of the East waft many strange things into the consciousness of men who venture among them; but never have I struggled with a more weakening sense of futility in the face of the impossible than at the moment that I leveled my rifle and aimed at Koshinga. But when I saw him over my sights, that feeling was swept away somewhat by the confidence a man feels who has learned to trust his weapon. This, I reminded myself, was no arrow that might be turned aside, no matchlock cheated of its bullet—it was a rifle that would shoot where it was held. When I knew my aim was perfect, I pulled the trigger.

The crack of my rifle was echoed by Hazard's. Out of the corner of an eye I saw by the position of his piece that he had followed my example, had fired at the same mark.

Now, in shooting I yield to few men, but I yield to Hazard; and it was with a surge of certain and somewhat savage exultation that I looked for Koshinga's downfall.

When I saw him still standing there, evidently untouched, insolent in his immunity from death, and in a way magnificent in his imperturbability, I had a moment of absolute stupefaction. But the next moment came anger at being so easily balked; and that anger, backed by a certain driving curiosity and by the obsession of pursuit that had so long possessed me, brought me half to my feet with a reckless resolve in my mind.

"I'm going to go," I cried to Hazard. "I'm going to get him. I'm going to find out if he's flesh and blood or——"

"Don't. The Lolos would cut you off. Wait until——"

Hazard gripped me and pulled me down again.

"But you could hold the Lolos. You might hold them. And he's there, within reach——"

"The Lolos need more urging," said Hazard, and renewed his fire. "He's

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where?" he inquired after the second shot. "Where he appeared to be from the other side of this show-place of his, or where he appears to be from here?"

"Why," I said bewilderedly, but yielding to Hazard's will, "he's where we see him."

"But we don't see him," said Hazard. "Those bullets followed the line of our eyesight."

"Then what," I cried, checking my fire again, for the demoralized Lolos had broken in a mass for the exit, "what is it we do see? And what did we hear? Is he master of our senses, this——"

"I watched him as we ran across the theater," said Hazard, straining his voice to be heard above the triumphant yelling of the Chinese. "He moved, but he didn't walk. He floated sidewise across that black platform like an image in a— Ah, he's gone!"

It was true. As he had appeared, so he had disappeared, wraith-like; there'd been no time for any ordinary departure. I stared in amazement, and yet with a faint suggestion of the truth, springing from Hazard's words, slowly enlightening my understanding.

"Did you ever read," Hazard assisted me, "of 'Doctor Pepper's ghost,' that so bewildered Europe in the middle of the last century until it was proved to be nothing but an arrangement of——"

"—of mirrors!" I exploded violently, half-angry and half-ashamed at having been so easily deluded.

"Of transparent plate glass," corrected Hazard, "placed at an angle for reflection. But this, no doubt, is a mirror—a mirror of polished steel. Leaning forward, well back from the front of the platform and extending clear across it, with Koshinga facing it from in front and below——"

"Of course, the floor of the platform is broken—probably nothing but a black-lined opening deep enough to conceal Koshinga, extending clear from the mirror to the edge of the platform. That's the way I see it."

"And the arrows, fired at an angle to that mirror, merely glanced off," I cried with a picture of the whole thing in my mind. "That accounts for the cracking sound we heard. And, of course, as soon as they passed across the reflection of Koshinga and came against that black background, they would disappear. While our bullets——

"But the Lolos are gone—" I sprang to my feet—"and Koshinga's still there somewhere. We can get him now. Or at least——"

"We can try," said Hazard. "But Koshinga may not be alone, and he always plans for an open door behind him. In this case there's the avenue of heaped-up rocks back of the platform—and I, for one, don't feel like following him there. No; I'm afraid we've had our chance at him."

OUR investigations but verified Hazard's conclusions. Of Koshinga we discovered no trace; and we found the arrangement of the platform very much as Hazard had foreseen, with the added detail that very close scrutiny showed the great mirror, of the most beautifully polished steel I ever saw, to be made up of many sections very skilfully jointed together, so it could be easily set up anywhere.

Which whole arrangement, by the way, we still believe explains the seeming miracles of the old-time Boxer leaders. Our bullets had perforated the mirror, but the Chinese *jingals* of 1900 were very low-powered, and would probably have affected it no more than the arrows.

Since the Boxer society was really but an offshoot of the Ko Lao Hui, this belief also helps to explain Koshinga's possession of the paraphernalia. But that explanation isn't really necessary. Koshinga had man-power enough at that stage of history to create whatever his wily mind might conceive and to convey it where he would, even into Lololand, once he had made his truce. And to his immediate subordinates secrecy was a condition of life.

The disposal of the altogether too useful mirror puzzled us until we remembered that we had another problem in the dispostion of the surplus arms and ammunition. Then we got our grateful Chinese to load the extra rifles, chambers and magazines, and to pile them, together with the remaining boxes of cartridges, in the hollow of the platform just in front of the mirror. Shortly after we left it, the platform was seen to be on fire, and the ensuing explosions left the mirror a dulled and

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twisted sheet of steel. It was all well; Yunnan was safer with those rifles out of the hands of the freed Chinese, and perhaps the Chinese themselves were safer.

Then we left in haste, for there was no telling how long the terror of the Lolos would hold. But once under way we were a formidable-looking cavalcade enough, and the road cleared ahead of us to the lowlands.

We were half-way there, Hazard and I leading, the Chinese trotting behind us on their requisitioned ponies, holding their rifles awkwardly and with slippered feet dangling well above the low-hanging Lolo stirrups, when I said to Hazard:

"I understand pretty nearly everything. Of course Shen Yun's story, if he lived up to it, insured that we would at least be able to communicate with the Chinese slaves. And those slaves constituted the weakness in Koshinga's position that you referred to in the beginning. But how did you know they would be able to help us?

"I didn't know it," said Hazard. "But it was a big thing we were up against, this particular play of Koshinga's—one worth a long chance."

"I can see," I said, "quite apart from their usefulness as leaders, that with the Lolos safely Ko Lao Hui and armed as Koshinga meant to arm them, there would have been no blocking the Ko Lao Hui program in Western China. The rest of the country would have been forced into the brotherhood as a matter of self-preservation. Then the Lolos could have been taken farther east, with much the same effect."

"It was a big thing," repeated Hazard, "but at least that project of Koshinga's is ended; he'll never make way in Lololand again.

"But that face—" I lowered my voice "—that centuries-old, prophesied face. Was it——"

"Another mask," replied Hazard, "or reality? Well, we'll see."

Some Delusions About Indians

by **Hugh Pendexter**

IT WOULD have been much better if this country had been named America before Columbus discovered it. Then his misnomer of "Indians" would not have been perpetrated. One of the most widely prevalent fallacies concerning the origin of the red man is that he descended from the "lost tribes of Israel."

The "Book of Mormon" tells how Nephi, the prophet, landed on the coast of South America in 600 B.C. It has also been argued that the Indians sprang from the Chinese, the Japanese, Tartars, Greeks, Carthaginians, Phœnicians, Scythians, Irish, Welsh, Polynesians, from people migrating from the Aleutian Islands and also from islands of Australasia.

Widely separated peoples, occupying the same stage of savagery and barbarism, will discover the possibility of stabbing and throwing sticks, the bow and arrow, the shield for defense; will explain the phenomena of the sun, the winds and rain along similar lines; and the scores of theories intending to solve the origin of the Indian are based on some such similarity of habits and customs. The old world has been ransacked to find the progenitors of the red man, and each theory in turn has been thrown into the discard.

Another notion commonly possessed is that the Indian is always grave, stern, taciturn. Such a stolid demeanor was and is not true of the Western Indian. His love for etiquette, his devotion to ritualistic detail in all his ceremonies, his trick of masking his true feelings by an impassive facial expression, gave currency to this belief among the uninitiated. Among his fellows and friends and with his family he could appreciate a joke and could play with his children.

Parkman and other writers describing the Eastern Indians picture the fierce Iroquois as genial and companionable when at home and not engaged in war. The folk-lore of the Cherokees abounds in humorous tales some of which were brought back to the whites by runaway negroes and later told by Uncle Remus. These evidence their love for sunshine and laughter.

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It was commonly supposed that the mound-builders were a race distinct from the Indians and were vastly more civilized. There is no proof that these people and the cliff-dwellers were more highly civilized than the Indian, or that they were not the forefathers of the Indian found by the white men. A newspaper article appearing shortly before this was written—August, 1919—described the finding of some red-headed cliff-dwellers; and there was a myth among the ancient Cherokees of white people who were exterminated by the Indians. But no research work has substantiated the myth, and I know of no evidence proving the alleged red-haired race to be white, or that the hair was not colored. Albinism is often found among the Zuñi and Pueblos. The Mandans were prematurely gray.

In speaking of myths it has been popular the world over for the credulous and mystery-loving to believe in giants and pigmies. The Western world did not escape. Pigmies are supposed to have lived in Tennessee because of the finding of skeletons in tiny stone coffins. Where the skeletons were not those of children they were adult bones stripped of flesh, the coffin being an ossuary. Likewise when the skeleton of an Indian of unusual size was found, a race of giants was promptly accepted.

The Indian had no idea of heaven and hell, or of reward and punishment. Undoubtedly every tribe had some idea of life continuing after death, but the belief was hazy and differed among various tribes. The "Great Spirit" was the missionary's interpretation of the red man's "Great Mystery." His "happy hunting-grounds" was a shadowy duplicate of his earthly hunting career, plenty of game, etc.

Pictures of Indians indolently smoking while the women carried heavy burdens has caused the belief that the man was a loafer and the woman a worker. This is an exaggeration. The woman had her domestic duties, attended largely to the tillage, made baskets and clothing. In these duties she had the aid of the old men and the children. Where captives were held they were put to work with the women, thus lightening her labors.

The men believed they had done their part when they procured the daily food supply and did the fighting. They fashioned their weapons for the war and chase, made their canoes, often dressed skins and were always ready at any moment to repel attacks and fight until the women and children could withdraw to a place of safety.

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Mixing In

A Complete Novelette

By Roy P. Churchill

Author of "Inside and Outside," "Substantially Correct," etc.

HAD it not been that Señor Seth Raymond, resident manager of the Loma Plantation & Mining Company, had for his only child an attractive daughter, and if John Marriott had not come to the republic of San Rafael to the city of El Encanto, there would still be much to tell about the steamship *Nimis*, but it would not be this story.

The *Nimis* had been a free gift of the sea to the city of El Encanto. A great steel ship, stanch and strong, built rivet by rivet and plate by plate in a slow Spanish shipyard, and flung up bodily and set down gently on an even keel by the great tidal wave, just as if Neptune, jealous of the lavish gifts of fruit and flowers and bright birds and soft green foliage, which the air and sky and rain had given El Encanto, had not been quite satisfied with the sea's part, and had thrown this toy as well at the feet of a favored land.

The city had wondered at first, and then begun to realize fully how really bountiful the sea had been, and to match her wits against those who would take it away.

First had come the owners of the ship to go over her foot by foot and plate by plate, finding no damage, for in coming ashore she had followed the course of a small creek and been jammed tight against its bottom and sides a full hundred yards from salt water, and remained there while the water of the big wave rolled back to sea, filling up and leveling over the creek-bed with countless tons of sand and gravel, and packing it around the *Nimis's* keel and six feet up on her sides until she had as secure and unshaking a foundation as any building in the city.

With true Caucasian disregard of native feeling in any matter, the owners set calmly about to dig their property out. They overhauled her engines, packing them with thick, rust-defying grease, battened down the hatches, spread the awnings and hired a hundred men with picks and shovels. After a month it was hard to see what they had done, except for the work on the ship itself, which was good.

The workmen and owners did not get along well. There were complaints and certain high-handed methods of dealing with misunderstood labor until one morning the city of El Encanto sent in its bill for accumulated taxes, for disturbance of the peace, for trespass, and for other things so numerous that the owners gave up the job and went to court with the underwriters.

Meanwhile, by due process of law and seizure under judgment, the *Nimis* became

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legally the property of the city. Then the underwriters bought her and tried salvage; and after their failure two other companies paid a goodly sum to the city of El Encanto, dug a while and left. So that when Stith & Yoeman, New York contractors, sent John Marriott to San Rafael to dig out the *Nimis* the vessel was counted as one of the best revenue-producing properties of the republic.

Had John Marriott known it, the San Rafaelians had no intention of giving up this golden-egg-laying goose. The year before the *presidente* had got himself reelected overwhelmingly by fitting up the good engines and boilers of the *Nimis* into a power-plant to make electricity for the city. She was an institution, a free gift, a monument and a curiosity. Twice at least the exclusive Associated Press had given her half a column.

John Marriott had come to El Encanto to take all this away, and the job at first seemed absurdly easy. He wondered why some of the later attempts, with equipment almost as modern as his own, had not been able to swing it.

It worried him some when the resident manager served the spicy iced drink out on his screened and shaded veranda, and he had met Linda Raymond, that his stay in El Encanto was to be so short. He had come about men, native labor, and had a letter to Seth Raymond from Basil Yoeman, the junior member of his firm.

The resident manager had been explaining the merits of the iced drink to his guest with the air of a discriminating connoisseur, and from the depths of the big wicker chair which held his spare frame had been sizing up the young American. Little had been said regarding the business at hand.

"Fifty will be quite enough to start with," said John Marriott, and Seth Raymond had nodded slightly, dismissing that phase of the subject without discussion.

"I will be glad to arrange it," he said, "and will have them for you in two days."

Just at that moment Linda Raymond opened the screen door leading to the veranda and joined them. From then on the resident manager retired to the background and took the business of the Spanish ship *Nimis* with him. In a little while he excused himself and left the two alone.

His girl was dressed all in white, and was as slenderly beautiful as any of the white flowers which clung to the climbing vine on the screen and swayed in the soft air. She was sun-colored and alive, with a healthful glow which spoke of tennis and horseback—for the seacoast of San Rafael permitted outdoor activities which the tropical heat of the interior did not—and despite her dark eyes, which matched her father's in keenness, she was so purely Caucasian in type that John Marriott knew there was no trace of kinship with the brown and olive of the native women.

"Tell me about the States," she said at once. "What are they playing, and what are they singing?" She smiled at him frankly with a glance at the white dress. "And what are the girls wearing? I have only been back once since I came down from school."

John Marriott did his best to tell her. Before he realized that the afternoon was gone he was declining an invitation to remain for supper, and the two had arranged a horseback ride for the next afternoon up the mountain-side back of El Encanto to the silver-mines which were part of Seth Raymond's care.

Marriott realized when he returned to his hotel and began to write his business letters and report, that his first purpose in San Rafael was to float the steamer *Nimis*. There were a number of things he wanted to talk over with the resident manager, and advice to be asked for on many subjects. He had a good deal at stake—more even, since seeing Linda Raymond, than before, although this was as yet a vague thought which he had not taken time to analyze.

THROUGH college and back from military service, he had found his only tangible asset to be a chance to go to work for Stith & Yoeman. The firm built subways and bridges and railroads, salvaged ships, made breakwaters and dredged harbors.

John Marriott's father had once been with them, but just before a swollen western river had taken him he had launched his own company. With the eager acceptance of youth Marriott had looked only perfunctorily at details and had accepted without question what Basil Yoeman told him of his father's affairs. He remembered the interview only vaguely, for mixed with the shock of his father's sudden going and an instinctive dislike of Basil Yoeman's fat, pig-eyed

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bulk was the realization that life had rather suddenly brought a careless helter-skelter boyhood up with a round turn.

"We'll try you out on this San Rafael job," Yoeman had told him, fussing ponderously with a paperweight on his broad, cluttered desk. "A couple of concerns have made a failure of it. They had no backing; no up-to-date equipment. We're giving you both.

"Get her off in three months with the price of tonnage as high as it is now, and it means fifty thousand dollars to you personally if you keep the expense down to what the bookkeepers say it ought to be, basing the calculations on jobs of the same kind."

He looked up at John Marriott then appraisingly with just enough challenge to wipe out any wavering doubt of the boy's acceptance.

"I'll take it, of course," said John Marriott, having a little struggle to make his tone as friendly as he wished. "I'm glad to get the chance. It will mean a start for me."

"Good," grunted Basil Yoeman. "I will have everything ready for you to look over tomorrow—contracts, estimates, everything that we can figure out in advance."

JOHN MARRIOTT, in his wide, airy room at the hotel in El Encanto, leaned back in his chair and let himself dream a little. From below on the street came soft voices in liquid Spanish and the murmuring of a far-off guitar atune with the drone of lazy insects in the trees. A sea-breeze, tempering the flower-perfumed air, crept through the window and tapped a curtain against the screen.

Of course the *Nimis* had to get back into her element. Success meant a bigger job, and there was the money for this one, and a start, and Linda Raymond.

The next day Marriott telephoned the girl's father, and arrived half an hour early for the engagement. Seth Raymond sat at ease in the same wicker chair which had held him the day before, and a black boy in very clean and stiffly starched linen brought ice and the different parts of his favorite drink for the master to mix. As before, he said little, but so friendly was his manner that very shortly John Marriott had told him all about himself.

"What I can't understand, Mr. Raymond," he said, coming ba[illegible] the business at hand after his brief recit[illegible]s how these several companies which have tried to float the ship have failed."

"One thing and another," said Raymond, "but mostly by not being entirely neutral. Men that come here, big enough men to undertake such a project, can't keep their hands off the country. They want to show the natives how it should be run, and it ends by some one else running."

"But you have been here fifteen years," said Marriott.

"Yes," said Raymond simply.

"What is your method?" smiled Marriott. "It would be worth my while to study it, even for so brief a stay as three months."

"It can be explained in a few words," said the older man seriously. "Don't meddle. Attend to your own affairs. Be fair, but refuse to mix in on anybody's side."

"Then there are sides?"

"Just as everywhere, the ins and the outs. But it isn't always that the ins are the most powerful."

"I'll do my best," promised the young man, and went away with Linda into the hills, where he forgot all about the ship.

The fifty workmen reported for work next day, and under the direction of Ballard Donovan and McDonald Cord began to assemble the equipment and put together the company's dredge. Donovan and Cord were John Marriott's assistants, and the three of them were to be the only Americans on the job.

"A good bunch of workers," said Donovan, as he directed the screwing-together of the steel frames of the dipper. "If they keep on like this and stick with us we'll have our canal navigable in less than the time-limit."

"Maybe so," said Cord, "but these fellows get to be as full of notions as a bridge is full of bolts after the novelty wears off."

"We'll work them while they're willing," said Marriott, "and get a few licks laid up for a rainy day."

John Marriott noticed also a certain half-familiar air about the men, and to try out his theory began at lunch to give sharp military commands in Spanish. In a moment the fifty men had lined up in double rank and were ready to count off in squads. But the experiment had gone far enough with John Marriott. He gave the order of dismissal; the men grinned at him good-humoredly and went back to their dinner pails.

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"A bunch of soldiers, every one of them," he told Donovan and Cord, and began to wonder whether they belonged to the ins or the outs.

In so short a time that John Marriott's daily reports began to be tinged with enthusiasm the barren stretch of sand surrounding the *Nimis* and stretching from her to the water was decked out with Stith & Yoeman's really worth-while equipment, and the work well started. What pleased Marriott most of all was that everything seemed to go without a hitch, and he found time for a good many hours and half-hours and a few afternoons with Linda Raymond.

What remained of a previous attempt to dig out the ship was still in evidence in a wide, shallow ditch which began at her stern and ran seaward, but at no part reaching sea-level. John Marriott calculated that the months spent in making it with shovels and team scrapers represented only about a week's activity with the floating, steam-driven dredge which he depended upon to do most of his work. The dredge had been brought down on the steamer with its several component parts divided into stowable weights about the decks and the steamer's holds.

As dredges went, it was a small affair, its steel dipper being capable of taking out only one-fifth of the load of some of the larger ones which Stith & Yoeman used nearer home, but it was portable, adjustable and simple, and John Marriott had a keen pride in it, for he knew that his father had helped design the original model for just such work in out of the way places.

THE land-locked bay of El Encanto, a deep, safe anchorage, guarded from the Caribbean by a string of green islands, was as smooth and placid as a lake, and to make matters even more favorable for working the floating dredge, the *Nimis* had come ashore where a little cove marked the old stream-bed, and the mouth of the canal which John Marriott was deepening and widening was protected even in its beginning from the playful choppy seas which the bay sometimes had on a breezy afternoon. A spur track was built down to the water's edge, and from the beginning the dipper was able to put its load of sand and gravel in the cars to be hauled well to the side by the small locomotive, and dumped.

The fifty original workers were augmented by a few more, and at the end of a month, which had gone swiftly with every day full to the brim of pleasant, purposeful work, John Marriott's dredge had coughed and gouged its clamorous way half the distance to the idle propeller-blades of the *Nimis*. His native workman had gone at their work faithfully and industriously.

There had been a few minor accidents, settled out of hand by courteous native officials, and Donovan and Cord had figured out a schedule which was iron-clad, as far as their chief could see, which would put them, equipment packed and aboard the steamer, bound for home a full two weeks before the alloted three months.

"I can't just get it," said Ballard Donovan to Marriott. "There's too much '*sí, sí, señor*' stuff. It's not natural in this country. There's bound to be a collection-plate passed before we're through."

"They'll have to hurry then," Marriott told his assistant, "else we will have the ship and be gone some fine morning."

None of the three Americans working on the *Nimis* knew what was happening. They were too busy on the job at hand, and Seth Raymond had told John Marriott not to meddle.

But rising to power in the republic of San Rafael was Vicente Ordaz, Minister of War. When Don Pablo Elizalde had been elected *Presidente*, partly because of the installation of a city lighting-system by using the stranded Spanish steamer, and partly on account of the Minister of War's iron hand with the soldiers, Ordaz had thought of his place in the cabinet only as a stepping-stone to higher things; and, given a full hand by the *Presidente*, he made his hold still firmer on the army, and worked diligently to undermine Elizalde's influence.

It seemed to the scheming secretary that the time had come to oust Don Pablo and put himself in when the just old *Presidente* allowed work to be resumed on the salvaging of the *Nimis* without the usual hindrances and delays.

Ordaz's plan was to help the work until success seemed assured for the American company, and then to work up public feeling against giving up the vessel, and at the last moment suddenly to seize both ship and presidency, backed by the loyal support of his army and the popular demand that El Encanto be not robbed of the prize the sea had so bounteously given.

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So it was that when John Marriott, through Seth Raymond, the resident manager, asked for fifty men or a hundred, he got them promptly, and the men stuck loyally to their jobs, for they were all soldiers as Marriott had discovered, drawing pay from Ordaz, as well as good wages from the work.

Marriott knew little of this, but Seth Raymond knew it all, every phase and detail of the schemes and the workings of the Minister of War's mind. To his enthusiastic reports the older man made few comments, and bade him work hard and await developments and not set his heart too keenly on getting away at any date.

"You can never tell what may happen in this country," Raymond had told him more than once. "To me, an outsider, looking on as if I had a box seat at a play, this uncertainty is one of its charms."

Which advice took only a shallow hold on John Marriott, for the money prize he would earn with the salvaging of the ship was only a part of what he wished to gain in San Rafael. If he made it, he meant to ask Linda Raymond to marry him.

And meanwhile wise old Seth Raymond, sitting back in cold aloofness in his wicker chair, watching the play of El Encanto's many moods, saw his safe policy of not meddling approach inevitable disaster.

STRIDING briskly up the walkway which led to the Raymonds' flower-bordered, vine-covered bungalow to keep an engagement for a horseback ride with Linda Raymond one day, John Marriott could not help hearing a few words of what was said in the screened veranda. His rubber heels made slight sound on the brown cement, and from within came Seth Raymond's voice—not loud, but with a cold positiveness which meant that the denial he was making was final.

"No!" he was saying. "Let there be no reopening of this subject."

A passionate protest broke from the other occupant of the veranda, and Seth Raymond cut into it with even more sharpness in his tone than before.

"No!" he repeated. "All the wealth and all the prospects and all the safety in El Encanto would not make me change a hair's breadth."

"We shall see, *señor*," said the other voice, and as John Marriott reached the bell, glad to be no longer an unavoidable eavesdropper, there was a scrape of a chair on the veranda, and John Marriott was admitted just as Vicente Ordaz was departing.

"Marriott," said the resident manager in his usual pleasant way, "I want to introduce you to the Minister of War, Señor Vicente Ordaz."

Ordaz bowed, looked Marriott over appraisingly and took his snowy panama from the hall-boy. "I must ask the *señores* to excuse me," he said with a poise which matched Seth Raymond's.

As Ordaz went out Linda Raymond came in, spoke to Marriott and ran to her father's side.

"Thanks, daddy," she said, kissing his forehead.

She was slightly pale, just a little nervous, and John Marriott wondered what had happened. Seth Raymond patted the sleeve of his daughter's riding-coat and smiled up at her cheerfully.

"Run along, you two," he said, "and let the old man answer at least one of the sixteen letters that should go on tomorrow's steamer."

The horses were at the door, and as they rode off Vicente Ordaz saw them go from the shade of the two big palms at the entrance to the resident manager's grounds, where he waited for his carriage.

"What happened?" asked Marriott. "Did I break up a conference? Ordaz did not seem pleased."

"You did come in at a bad time," smiled Linda, "though I don't think it worried father so much."

"I'm sorry," said Marriott politely. "Wonder what Ordaz wanted anyhow."

"Me," said Linda soberly.

"You!" cried Marriott. "Not an offer of marriage from him?"

"Why not?" Linda asked. "He is of good position and family. The only unusual thing about it was father's emphatic denial."

"But—but you wouldn't consider him, would you, Linda?"

"Of course not," she laughed, much to John Marriott's relief. "But my daddy is the best in the world, and we have lived here so happily together. I hope trouble is not going to come now."

"I don't think I understand," said Marriott.

"Ordaz has had whatever he wished in this country. Father thinks his design is

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to overthrow the present government and make himself dictator. In that position he could make himself unpleasant."

John Marriott was struggling to keep back the words he had promised himself should not be spoken until he had completed his work in El Encanto. Linda Raymond felt the tenseness, and went on quickly.

"Perhaps I ought to go North until things settle down, but I don't want to. Father has been so contented since I came home from school. More like himself than at any time since mother went."

They rode on for a little way in silence.

"Father loves this country, and so do I for that matter, though I'd like more trips to the States. This wonderful soft climate gave mother years of life after we had tried everything else. Why can't we be let alone, and why couldn't I have been a little girl always, and not grow into a cause of dissension?"

The girl's confidence was as one friend to another, and John Marriott thought he had perfect self-control.

"You'll let me help, won't you, Linda, if I may?" he blurted out. "I'd like to very much, you know."

"See father," she smiled at him, her mood changing suddenly. "He's ridden through safely on the crest of more than one revolution, and he'll get through this one, with his grown daughter tagging after, just the same."

"But I don't want to be left out," said Marriott. "I'm another American, and I want the right to get in on my own side."

"Don't you think it would be wise to talk it over with father?"

"Wise perhaps, but very un-American. Listen, Linda. I thought I could wait until the ship is safely afloat, but I can't. I want you myself. Won't you give me the right to say a few negatives to such men as Ordaz?"

Linda Raymond pulled her horse aside, struck its flanks with her sharp riding-boots, and was away at a gallop. Straight before them was a level stretch of smooth road, tree-bordered and shady.

When the surprized young American had his horse following at a run Linda Raymond was half a dozen lengths ahead, but he began slowly to gain until at the end of the smooth stretch of road he was beside her again, and the horses had dropped back to a walk.

"I mean it, Linda," he persisted, somewhat out of breath.

"You may talk it over with father," she told him, looking straight into his eyes and laughing at him.

"I won't," he said. "It isn't father I want. It's you."

"No," she said firmly. "You couldn't do otherwise after my plea for sympathy. But we do want your help, John," and she put out her hand, comrade-fashion.

"All right," he said, "but I'm going to ask you so many more times that you'll run out of excuses."

" 'No' is a small, easy word, Mr. John Marriott."

"So is 'yes,' Miss Linda Raymond."

But John Marriott knew he made his case worse by persistence just then, so made himself content with what he had, letting the girl's slim brown hand go and playing the good comrade the best he knew how.

VICENTE ORDAZ called on John Marriott at his hotel that evening, and the American entertained his guest in his room. The Minister of War was extremely polite, and Marriott waited, taking a lesson from the method of the resident manager and curbing his impatience until the mask should slip aside and the real purpose of the man's visit became known.

"How is the work progressing, *señor?*" asked Ordaz, finishing his ice-laden glass.

"Everything has been most satisfactory," said Marriott. "I believe I may thank you for helping to furnish efficient workmen."

Ordaz shrugged. "It is something to be obeyed," he said. "It is my desire that the work be completed as it has begun. There are reasons why I wish it so."

"That's good," said Marriott. "Keep your bunch coming and we will have the ship afloat before time. I have promised the men a bonus."

Ordaz looked at Marriott shrewdly, his black eyes glinting, and made his threat so simple that John Marriott had to let the words soak in before he understood their full meaning.

"But if all is to continue in such harmony," Ordaz was saying, one ringed, pudgy hand rolling his black mustache to a point, "the Señor Marriott would do well to pay the strictest attention to the ship alone."

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Marriott's eyes widened in surprize, and his brow puckered in a frown. Just at first he could not believe it.

"Please explain exactly what you mean, *señor*," he said coldly, restraining his growing anger.

"Señorita Raymond," said Ordaz with sneering impudence.

Marriott rose so hastily that his chair overturned behind him. "Get out!" he cried, advancing.

Ordaz went rather hurriedly, his evil eyes glittering with hate, but plainly afraid of the young American's violence.

"Well, of all the yellow curs!" John Marriott grumbled to himself. "Why didn't I go on and kick him anyway? Trying to bribe me to keep away from Linda Raymond!"

But the next morning none of the native workmen was on the job, and John Marriott set about seeing where he could get a new lot. Seth Raymond offered little hope.

"It won't be easy," he told Marriott. "'Most everybody is afraid of Ordaz. He has handed out good pay and new uniforms until the army is for him almost solid, and Presidente Elizalde has let things go on without seeming to notice. I looked for things to pop within a few months, and I hoped when you came down that you would get your ship off and be out of it before it came, but you can't tell now. It may happen any time."

"How about you and Linda?" asked Marriott.

"We would have gone through safely enough," said Seth Raymond, "had it not been for what I told Ordaz yesterday. That makes it different. Just money doesn't seem to satisfy him."

"Why don't you and Linda go on north on the boat tomorrow?" offered Marriott. "You have been mighty good to help me, and without you perhaps the *Nimis* won't float, but that affair makes small difference compared with other things.

"I don't like this sneak Ordaz. I wouldn't put shooting a man in the back past him. I want to apologize for not kicking him last night."

Seth Raymond smiled at the other's vehemence.

"Keep your shirt on," he said. "I'm going to see if I can get you some men, and it looks as if I'm going to be dragged into politics by the ears whether it suits me or not."

PRESIDENTE ELIZALDE kept a number of impatient officials cooling their heels in the anteroom while he saw the manager of the Loma Plantation & Mining Company.

"Come in, Señor Seth Raymond," said the shaggy-bearded, portly-figured *Presidente.*

He was of the best type of Central American leaders; rather ponderous in his movements and in his decisions, but kindly, cheerful and just. He took Seth Raymond's hand in both of his and shook it warmly.

"And what is it, Señor Seth?" he asked. "More land for the boring of silver? More permission to build too good houses for the workers?"

"None of that, Don Pablo," said Raymond. "I want to give you what we in America call a straight talking-to, and you know what that means. As we say in my country, and you in yours, there's a hen on."

"So?" said the cheerful *Presidente.* "But first it is well to wet our throats with the ginger drink, for the discovery of which I am indebted to Señor Seth."

He pressed a bell, gave an order to the boy who speedily appeared, and turned to his visitor.

"Proceed," he said simply, and Seth Raymond caught an underlying gravity in the lightness of his tone.

"First of all," said the resident manager, "you know what my policy has been in San Rafael. Business strictly. No politics. No meddling."

Don Pablo nodded. "You have done well, *señor.*"

"I know it, but only a fool never changes. From now on I'm a partizan. I'm speaking as a partizan now, and in the thing which is coming I am on the side of Don Pablo Elizalde, tooth and nail."

"Yes?" said the *Presidente* softly.

Seth Raymond hitched his chair closer, and spoke crisply.

"This man Vicente Ordaz, your Minister of War, is getting his wires laid to take things over. He has the army sewed up, ready to do any dirty work he says. He has offered them double pay, the officers better places, and, for all I know, a good share of the silver-mines of our company. He's using the salvaging of the Spanish ship to work up public feeling against you. He plans to walk in here some fine morning with his army behind him, hang my good friend

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Pablo to a lamp-post, and do entirely and particularly as it suits his fancy."

"Yes?" repeated the old *Presidente*, still softly. "What you say is of great interest."

"I'd think it would be," said Seth Raymond, just a little nettled at the *Presidente's* stoicism. "That's my whole story. What are you going to do about it?"

The *Presidente* leaned back in his chair and took a long, appreciative sip of the iced drink which had been placed before him.

"A thousand thanks, good friend," he said. "I'm thinking of taking a little trip to my estate in the foot-hills. Would it be asking too much if Señor Seth would come with me? I wish very much to show him—my crops."

Seth Raymond caught something in the *Presidente's* eyes.

"It will afford me great pleasure," he replied, bowing. "I will be ready at any hour you say."

"But one moment, *señor*," said the *Presidente*, stopping him, smiling quizzically the while. "Why do you interest yourself? Why after all these years change the policy?"

"I have a grown daughter," said Seth Raymond.

"And a very pretty one," supplemented the *Presidente*. "I think I understand clearly. Ordaz aims at the stars indeed, Señor Seth. It is agreed then; at dawn tomorrow."

FOR three days work had stopped on the *Nimis*, and John Marriott fumed with impatience. All efforts to get workmen either in a group or by direct offers to individuals were met by evasions and unkept promises.

He cabled Stith & Yoeman and told them of the situation, and had an immediate reply from Basil Yoeman that difficulty was to be anticipated, and that they expected him to have the usual labor trouble, and also that it was very necessary that the floating of the ship be accomplished on time.

Marriott gathered no sinister meaning from the cablegram, and took it to mean that the contractors expected him to get the work done, and that they did not care to be bothered with details.

The power-lines which carried the electricity from the ship to the city had been cut on the first night after his native force quit work, and El Encanto's official newspaper carried an editorial on the subject which John Marriott very rightly attributed to Vicente Ordaz. The paper called the attention of the citizens of El Encanto to the lack of their accustomed lighting and asked if it was the intention of the Government to permit the city to remain dark. It pointed out in scathing language that with the going of the ship this condition would continue.

Marriott, Cord and Donovan repaired the damage to the electric-power wires after considerable trouble, for they found that a good-sized section of heavy copper cable had been cut out and removed, and took turns patrolling the line at night, which added another unpleasant duty to their growing list.

Then Seth Raymond came home, having little to say of his trip to the mountains with Presidente Elizalde, but offering John Marriott the first comfort he had had since Vicente Ordaz began his opposition.

"I picked up some labor while I was gone," he told the young man. "There's a farming-community up on one of the plateaux near the mines, whose crops are almost a failure this year. They are willing to work for a little extra money."

"This is wonderful news," said John Marriott. "We're getting behind every day. The only word I get from the company is an insistence that the ship be floated on time."

"What would that mean?" asked the resident manager.

"The profit on the contract, if they wished to push it, of course," said Marriott optimistically, "but I know how they work, and am not worried. They use every effort and are absolutely unforgiving until the time-limit is actually exceeded, and then give more time. They couldn't keep a good field man otherwise. But they won't give in until the last minute for fear every effort will not be made to finish the work."

"Well," said the resident manager, "fifty good husky farm-hands, the best sort of raw material for labor that a contractor ever laid eyes on, will be here tomorrow morning. It will be up to you to keep them happy and satisfied, and away from the wiles of Vicente Ordaz.

"I would suggest that you lay in a good stock of provisions and be prepared to give breakfast when they get here tomorrow. It would save time and keep them from getting separated and confused and overcharged, and perhaps some of them put in jail by Ordaz. I would suggest that you

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provide a few toys for the children as well."

"The *children!*" cried John Marriott.

"Why, yes," said Seth Raymond. "Their families are coming. Didn't I make you understand that this is an entire community, a village?

"There are thirty-two women and more than that many children. It is possible that there may be a couple more by the time they get here."

John Marriott gasped and started to make a protest, sidestepping the whole proposition, meanwhile searching the resident manager's tone and bearing for an inkling of just where his friend was poking fun at him.

But Seth Raymond was unperturbed, and looked at John Marriott as if somehow he expected him to rise to the occasion.

"But what am I to do, Mr. Raymond? How can I see to their housing and make them comfortable and contented?"

"There's most certainly a way, my boy," said the older man expectantly.

Of a sudden John Marriott caught the whole of the resident manager's plan.

"The ship!" he cried. "Why, of course, we'll house the whole works on the ship! Let 'em eat and sleep and live there, and tell Ordaz and his bunch of cut-throats to go hang!"

"Certainly," laughed Seth Raymond. "But I thought you'd never get it. They will have the time of their lives. It will be a new experience for them, and it will take a real revolutionary army to drive them away while the interest holds."

"A few weeks more, if they work as they should, will be enough," Marriott said happily.

"They'll work all right," Seth Raymond assured him. "They're used to it, and need the money. You get some food into the storeroom and fix up an extra gangway or two for getting up and down the ship's side, and they will be all right."

"What about bedding and getting the staterooms cleaned and in shape and assigned to the right ones?"

"Leave all that to the chief," said Seth Raymond. "Garcia's a good man, and can keep the whole colony living in harmony, if any one can. Take a page from the old man's experiences and don't meddle, even if you see him giving one of his grown daughters a spanking some morning."

John Marriott hurried back to the *Nimis* and enthusiastically broke the news to his grinning helpers. Ballard Donovan went to El Encanto, where he bought a goodly store of staple provisions, which were put into one of the ship's storerooms to be issued at cost against the accounts of the workers. Donovan was to have charge of the store.

"Let 'em come on," he told Marriott. "Won't be the first time I've run a commissary, and they are better off than any work-train bunch that ever camped on a siding."

Early the next day the new force arrived, and with so little confusion that it surprized John Marriott they took possession of the *Nimis*. Fifty stalwart, full-grown mountaineers reported for work before noon, and with them were fifteen or twenty half-grown boys, who, Garcia the chief said, would work for half-pay.

Savory odors began to rise from the spacious galley where the women were cooking, and children lined the rail, peering through with wide eyes at the chugging dredge and clattering dump-cars, the larger ones guarding the tots with shrill, excited commands.

"Just like home, sweet home," Cord cried to Marriott over the top of his busy levers. "If the wind doesn't change I'll have to go up and beg the chief for a plate of *frijoles*."

TWO days of uninterrupted work passed, during which the natives settled into their new quarters as if they had been there for weeks.

"They're workers, too," John Marriott reported to Seth Raymond. "We're taking out more dirt per day than we ever have."

"But you want to keep your weather eye open," warned the resident manager. "If you are watching the papers you can see that Ordaz is getting bolder every day. He is working up to a move."

The articles referred to were flaming criticisms of Presidente Elizalde, and of his policy of letting a foreign corporation take from the city, with what was termed a pittance in payment, a valuable property which belonged to all the people.

The places of loyal citizens who refused further to exploit their country had been taken by "unprincipled traitors." It was hinted that the newcomers were in the pay of the *Presidente*, who must have taken a bribe from the contractors in payment for his support.

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"It is just as well to play safe," advised Seth Raymond after a particularly bitter attack. "I want you to loan me ten of your men. There's some equipment up at the mine that might be needed. They can go up one night and come back the next, and only ourselves will know the difference."

When the equipment arrived and was placed aboard the *Nimis* John Marriott found that it consisted of a small but capable field-gun and fifty good rifles, with ammunition for all.

"We may never need it," Raymond explained as Mariott examined the guns and found them practically new, "but Ordaz means trouble, by every sign, and a little real stuff to back a bluff counts."

It occurred to John Marriott that if his workmen might need the rifles it would be well for them to know something of their use. He conferred with Garcia, and the largest between-decks cargo-space was cleared out for a drill-floor. Two evenings a week with the big cargo-lights illuminating the deck, and hidden from any spying eyes on the beach, the men went through the manual of arms.

Marriott was surprized at how much the men already knew, and at how well they took to the idea. He provided half a dozen small target-rifles and plenty of ammunition so that they could practise firing.

The colony seemed happy and contented, and except for a few rigorous sanitary regulations, which he had the chief enforce, Marriott followed Seth Raymond's advice and let them do almost entirely as they wished.

There were half a dozen accordions, and almost every man and boy had a stringed musical instrument of some kind. There were dancing and singing in the evenings, and on fête-days.

On Sundays they dressed in gay-colored clothes and went into San Rafael to church. They were well fed and content, and any internal strife which cropped up was quickly and effectively squelched by the chief.

But with the problem of labor solved John Marriott still had his hands full. The race between the time-limit of the contract and the day when he could haul the *Nimis* out into the bay was running too close for comfort. There was no sign of relenting with a few more precious days of grace by Stith & Yoeman.

In fact, though John Marriott was loath to believe it, the company seemed willing to make his task as inconvenient as they could. They were slow in sending his drafts. When he asked that a new supply of lubricating-oil be sent for the dredge, the shipment missed a boat, and McDonald Cord burned out a bearing trying to use an inferior grade. Spare parts for the dredge, the dump-cars and the locomotive had to be ordered repeatedly.

Combined with these troubles there was plenty in San Rafael. If one of his workmen ventured into town he was arrested on some pretext by Ordaz's soldiers, and only by making an appeal through Seth Raymond to the *Presidente* could he get a release without the payment of a stiff fine.

His workers began going out in groups and resisting arrest so effectively, but with such dire consequences to themselves, that Garcia had to forbid them to leave the ship in the evenings. In the little hospital he had rigged aboard the *Nimis* John Marriott often had three at one time suffering from knife and club wounds.

One morning when he came down to work he found his dredge sunk on its float in the canal, and three days were lost getting it afloat and to digging again.

Marriott wondered if the expiration of his contract and a revolution in San Rafael would not come at about the same time, and redoubled his efforts to get the ship out before either. As his men became expert he put on a night shift, taking a turn at the dredge with Cord and having Garcia pick out three of his best men to work under Donovan for patrol of the wires and for sentry-duty about the ship.

"If he means to start anything," Marriott asked Seth Raymond, "what is he waiting for? His following is at vapor-heat. If he waits too long their enthusiasm may cool."

"He is waiting for something, that is sure," replied the resident manager. "I'm beginning to believe he may hold off until the ship is actually afloat. It would leave that much less work for him, and the political effect would be greater."

"He wouldn't dare touch it," said John Marriott. "Our company has a clean bill of sale, and I can't see how a change of Government could change the title."

"Strange things happen in this country when the Governments change," smiled Seth Raymond patiently; "but this one

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hasn't changed yet. I would say from close observation that Elizalde was overdoing his indifference. It may be he has Ordaz worried."

"Well, let them bluff along for three more days and the *Nimis* will beat them to it. Once afloat, I'd feel safe. Are you sure that you and Linda won't be caught in this when it does break?"

"Nothing is sure, my boy," cautioned Raymond. "But why worry? Every day is a day, and hang-fires have a way of kicking back instead of shooting straight. How much time have you until the contract expires?"

"Two days," said Marriott soberly. "I have cabled Mr. Yoeman that I will be a day late. It will be all right, I'm sure. It's just as I told you; they hold out until the last minute."

Seth Raymond changed the subject, and John Marriott caught an apprehensive feeling that the resident manager did not share his optimism.

"Elizalde starts for the mountains in the morning for a week-end trip," Raymond was saying. "This will leave Ordaz with almost a free hand, and, though I do not think he is quite ready, I'd keep my eyes open."

SETH RAYMOND'S advice proved almost a prophecy, for as soon as *el Presidente* was out of the city Vicente Ordaz took possession of El Encanto, established headquarters in the palace and proclaimed himself dictator.

Among his first official acts were an edict stopping work on the *Nimis*, and an order for the arrest of a group of people who he very rightly knew had best be locked up until the new government was firmly established. These included Presidente Elizalde, Seth Raymond and John Marriott, and very thoughtfully Ordaz had included Linda Raymond.

John Marriott's first intimation that trouble had come was the sound of firing from the city; and, remembering Seth Raymond's warning, he set out for town to find the cause.

"Knock off work for half an hour," he told Donovan and Cord. "Issue rifles to the men and get them aboard the ship. We can't afford to be caught scattered out over the works. I won't be long. If anybody shows up tellt hem they will have to wait."

Taking the company's motor-cycle, Marriott opened the machine up full speed for town. His destination was Seth Raymond's, for he knew that his friends would know what had happened and could give him the facts much more quickly than if he attempted to gather them himself.

Passing through the outskirts of El Encanto, he found the stores closed and the streets almost deserted; and though there were occasional groups of soldiers and scattered shots came from the center of the city, no attempt was made to stop him. So far as he could see, there had been no great struggle between the opposing forces; and if there had been, it seemed practically over now.

"Ordaz must have had things about his own way," was Marriott's thought as he left his machine inside the hedge gate at the rear of Seth Raymond's house and ran up the graveled garden path.

No sound came from the kitchen or the servants' quarters, and Marriott thought it queer, for at this time of the day the resident manager's excellent cook with her following of assistants should have been getting luncheon.

The path curved among shrubs and flowers, and Marriott was hidden from view until he came up the back steps. As he did so a soldier inside the screen door thrust it open into his face and demanded that he raise his arms over his head. Motioning with his rifle, the soldier had the American precede him into the house, stopping before the closed door of Seth Raymond's library. From inside came the murmur of voices. There were two armed men in the hallway, and through the window John Marriott saw a group at the front entrance. The soldier knocked.

"Enter," called a familiar voice impatiently, and Marriott was shoved into the room.

"Greetings, Señor Marriott," said Ordaz, his impatience at being interrupted giving way to exultant triumph as he recognized the young American. "It gives me great pleasure to see you here."

Ordaz was fully armed, and ordered the soldier to close the door, leaving him alone with his quarry. With things so well in hand in the city the dictator had not been able to resist the pleasant task of himself arresting Linda Raymond. She stood at one side of the room beside her father,

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so haughtily defiant that Ordaz was angered beneath his suavity.

"What has happened?" asked Marriott, ignoring Ordaz and addressing Seth Raymond.

"Linda and I were about to start for a horseback ride," said Raymond calmly, "when Señor Ordaz, who has today proclaimed himself dictator of San Rafael, did us the honor to call. He was just about to state his business when you arrived."

"The *señor* knows very well," interrupted Ordaz quickly, somewhat nettled by the total lack of fear or disturbance in either father or daughter.

Then more calmly he continued—

"In a word, *señores:* With the city much unsettled I offer the refuge of the palace grounds and every protection to Señor Raymond and his daughter."

"But why the soldiers?" asked Raymond with pointed sarcasm.

"For my guests' protection," said Ordaz, keeping up his rôle but unable to mask the satisfaction with which he looked at Linda Raymond.

"Piffle!" snorted the resident manager, tired of foolery. "You have warrants for our arrest, Ordaz. The charge is treason. How many days have you counted on between this and the firing-squad?"

"You wrong me," said the dictator with an evil leer. "The formalities must be complied with."

He turned to John Marriott. "I am overjoyed that the *señor* took this occasion to call, and take pleasure in offering my protection to him also."

"Don't let my safety worry you," said Marriott. "I'll be able to worry along without it. I came over to take Mr. Raymond and his daughter to the ship, and if they are ready we will start now."

Young Marriott had been sizing up the situation. In reach of his hand lay a heavy block of silver ore, used as a paperweight; and Ordaz, with the satisfaction of what seemed to him a complete mastery of the situation, had taken the doubtful assumption that his quarry would be overawed by a show of force.

Before the young contractor was a picture of himself and Seth Raymond in the dungeon of the fort awaiting trial on any trumped-up charge that Ordaz wished to make, while Linda Raymond was being forced to receive the attentions of the dictator, probably being offered her father's freedom for submission.

"The ship is to be seized at once," sneered Ordaz. "Everything has been considered. Let us waste no time, *señores*."

Marriott looked from one to the other as if beaten, and Ordaz thought he saw a sign of weakening.

"I guess it's all up, Mr. Raymond," Marriott said reassuringly. "We might as well take a chance with Señor Ordaz."

AS HE spoke his hand closed on the lump of ore, and in the next instant Ordaz caught the heavy, swiftly thrown missile fully on his uniformed chest. Marriott had been too far away to trust striking the other's head; but the blow came so quickly that before Ordaz could recover John Marriott had jerked his revolver from him, and shoved its ugly muzzle into his side.

"Not a word but what I tell you," he whispered. "Call to your men outside and have the two that are at the back of the house brought to the front."

The heavy automatic revolver was pressing into the dictator's ribs, and the massive paperweight had not been gently thrown. Seth Raymond took Ordaz's other revolver from his belt.

For an instant the two Americans seemed to have the best of the situation; but Ordaz had given positive orders to his men that at the first sound of disturbance inside they were to investigate. He knew also that it would cause too many complications for the American to use the revolver on him.

As the weight fell to the floor, a knock came; and, drowning out John Marriott's whisper, a question from the leader of the soldiers.

"Help!" cried Ordaz boldly; and the outer door was flung open on the scene, and two native soldiers filled it with their rifles pointing.

As Ordaz was disarmed, Linda Raymond ran to the stairway which led to the upper bedrooms, and half-way up opened a door on the landing overlooking the room below. Ordaz marked her flight as if to know the quickest way to pursue her when the time came, and now gave a quick command to his two soldiers with their rifles pointed at Marriott and Raymond.

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"Do not fire at once," he ordered. "Take them prisoners. I would spare them for the *señorita's* sake."

He knew too well that Seth Raymond alive would be a more potent argument with the girl than if he were shot, and at the moment he could not discriminate between the two.

"The revolvers now," he told the two Americans; and as Seth Raymond and John Marriott hesitated he spoke again to the soldiers, who leveled their rifles. "Do not be foolish, *señores*. At the slightest resistance my men will fire."

John Marriott was closest to him, and as Ordaz held out his hand for the gun he made as if to reverse the weapon before handing it over. Marriott seemed nervous and fumbled the weapon awkwardly. Suddenly it slipped to the floor, and Marriott stooped after it apologetically.

Ordaz and his guard were momentarily deceived, just as Marriott thought they would be; and without warning, springing upward from the floor with all the power of bent legs and back, Marriott lifted the startled dictator and threw him bodily across the few feet which separated him from the soldiers. The three went down in a squirming heap.

"Don't a one of you move to get up!" cried Marriott, pointing the gun. "Lie still, or I will begin firing into the bunch."

Ordaz lay stunned, and his men did as they were told. Keeping the revolvers pointed, Marriott and Seth Raymond began backing toward the stairs where Linda had disappeared. More soldiers might appear at any minute; and Ordaz began to show signs of recovering from the effects of having his head used as a battering-ram.

"Where did Linda go?" asked Marriott. "Couldn't we find her and get away?"

"Here I am!" cried the girl behind them at the top of the landing. "No, don't fire, Gomez. Father may have another use for him."

With Linda were the three servants, all fully armed, who had been so mysteriously absent up until now.

"I certainly have," said Seth Raymond, unbounded relief in his voice. "Thanks to you, Linda, and Marriott here."

He turned to the leader of the three men.

"Gomez, you and Antonio go get him. He seems about able to walk if he is helped a little. We will keep the guns on the other two. Close the library door and bolt it. We will fire a couple of shots to draw the rest to the front, then go out the back way."

"I waved from the window," explained Linda Raymond, "and Gomez climbed up the vine to the kitchen roof. I had to wait until he returned with the others."

The two soldiers were disarmed and bound, and Ordaz, half-carried by two of Seth Raymond's men, was brought to the rear door. The whole affair had happened quickly, and as yet the group at the gate was unsuspicious. Only the men at the back of the house had to be accounted for.

Seth Raymond went to a window at the front of the house, and fired two shots through the glass.

"That will bring the whole lot of them to this side. Let's hurry, everybody, while the back is left unprotected."

As they slipped out unchallenged, Linda Raymond whispered additional details, and John Marriott began to understand that Seth Raymond had not meant to be caught unprepared. The three men servants were to be a body-guard in the flight to the hills, but Ordaz had surprized them on the eve of departure, when most of the household had already gone. The men had been waiting with the horses just outside the garden wall.

Ordaz was closely guarded, and seemed dazed by the quick turn of events.

"Keep close to him, Gomez," directed Raymond. "If he cries out or tries to bolt you may shoot. I know it would please you."

"*Sí, señor*," muttered Gomez grimly.

"I think the ship would be safest," suggested John Marriott. "Suppose we go there. We could stand quite a siege."

Seth Raymond seemed to be thinking the matter over, and made no immediate reply. From the front of the house came the shouts of men, uncertain as to what had best be done, and followed by the crash of a breaking door.

"They will be after us soon," decided Raymond. "You had better take Linda to the ship on your motor-cycle. Use the side road so that you won't have to go through town. I will take care of Ordaz. Will join you later. Other things to attend to."

He spoke hurriedly as the party ran

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down the winding path. As they reached Marriott's abandoned machine, they heard the men in the house come out on the back porch, but the shrubs hid them.

"How about you?" asked Marriott as Linda climbed to the rear seat of the motorcycle and he primed the motor for a quick, flying start.

"The horses," said Seth Raymond. "Ordaz can ride the one we had for Linda. We will be all right. Get Linda out of this. I am trusting you."

Marriott stepped on the pedal, and, as the machine started with a roar, jumped to the seat. Linda clung to him tightly, and in a moment they were swaying and bumping over the rough road to safety.

"You saved the day," Marriott told her when a smooth stretch permitted a few words.

"It was nothing to what you did. Whatever plans father had were upset by Ordaz's coming. Your helping changed everything. Do you think father will be all right with only our three men?"

"He certainly will," reassured Marriott; "especially with the chief villain as hostage."

Linda shuddered. "I'll be so glad when it is all over. I have dreaded father's getting mixed up in a revolution."

"It is a large part my fault," said Marriott. "He has helped me so much with the ship."

Linda did not reply, but Marriott knew that she understood fully the possession in El Encanto of which the dictator was most covetous.

WITHOUT encountering soldiers, and distancing pursuit, they reached the ship, and Linda was shown the stateroom Marriott had lately been using for his own.

"I can bunk anywhere," he told her. "There's plenty of room. Make yourself comfortable here. I'll have Garcia pick out a girl for your maid."

But Linda did not need the help of the chief. She already knew a number of the women and most of the children.

"Why, a lot of these people are from father's mine," she told Marriott in some wonder. "If it weren't for the revolution and father being in danger, living on the ship would be a lark."

"Wait until they get to yammering on their accordions and fourteen babies squalling and somebody singing dolefully at the moon."

"I've lived down here long enough to like it," she said unexpectedly, and John Marriott yielded to the insistent beckoning of Ballard Donovan and left her. It seemed to him that he couldn't get nearer than a hundred yards to telling her again that he loved her, no matter how hard he tried.

"We've got another visitor," said Donovan. "I don't like his looks, either. Fellow down from the head office. Credentials seem all O. K., but he belongs to the law department, and he's been snooping around and asking questions in a way that usually spells trouble."

"Where is he?" asked Marriott, remembering suddenly that the time-limit for floating the ship was up on the morrow, and that with the interruption of the revolution there was no possibility of getting her off on time.

"Maybe he's here to check up the excuses I've been making and give us a time-extension," he thought more cheerfully, as he went forward to the room he and Donovan had fitted up as an office.

"My name is Tucker—Phineas Tucker," began the sharp-faced, middle-aged caller, meeting John Marriott with hand outstretched, his tone sympathetic and somehow combining the unctuousuess of an undertaker with the apparent harmlessness of a deacon.

"I've some bad news, son," he continued, as if anxious to get through an unpleasant duty. "The old man—Mr. Yoeman, the big boss—doesn't like the way you have handled this contract. He sent me down to see what could be done."

His hand felt clammy and unclean to John Marriott, who dropped it promptly.

"What's the big trouble?"

"'Most everything. Too much money. Too much time. Mixing in with revolutions. I can't do a thing." Phineas shook his head sadly.

"I don't want you to do anything," said Marriott, trying to fathom the other's dolefulness, "except to give us a few days' time. Another full working day or two and the ship will be in the water. I have loyal labor right at hand. She is ready to steam. This revolution put us back."

"Too late!" croaked Phineas.

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"I don't get you at all," said Marriott impatiently.

Phineas Tucker reached inside his black seersucker coat and produced a cablegram. "Understand me, son, I've burned up the wires trying to get Basil Yoeman to give you more time, but he won't do it. This is final."

John Marriott was reading the message while Phineas Tucker mopped his perspiring face with a huge handkerchief.

There is no denying that the worthy Phineas had a tough job in breaking the news that he brought from the head office, but it is also true that he was eminently fitted for the task. Phineas was the firm's fixer. Bribery and coercion and the hiding of a full-grown fault behind a thin technicality were his tools, and he had grown adept from long practise. He could find a loophole in the law as easily as a mosquito finds a hole in a screen.

What worried him now was the fear that John Marriott, with the impetuosity of outraged youth, might not recognize when he was beaten, and give him more than the ordinary amount of trouble.

"What does this mean exactly?" asked Marriott. "The message says that you are to take over the contract."

Phineas Tucker rightly judged that the young man was sparring for time, trying to adjust himself, seeking some clue of hope. He jumped at the breach, planning to make a complete job of everything at once.

"Just this." Phineas discarded his suavity and became aggressive. "You are out. The old man has lost patience and won't stand for any more foolishmess. I am to take the work over and finish it. In another cable he gives me thirty days. He authorizes me to furnish you with transportation home, but you are to have nothing further to do with the work after noon tomorrow, when the contract becomes void."

"I am to lose the bonus—the fifty thousand that went with the job—over my expense account?"

"Certainly," said Phineas. "And let me give you a tip, son. You go on and resign. He will fire you otherwise. That's why I'm down here on the job a day ahead. Get tied up somewhere else. You are young yet. Maybe next time you will have better luck."

"Just where does Mr. Yoeman consider that I have fallen down on this contract?" asked John Marriott angrily, shooting the words at the smaller man while he stood over him defiantly. "I'd like to know. You seem to have had his confidence, while he let me go it alone. Half my wires unanswered, and plain orders for material balled up or ignored! *He* has broken faith, not I."

But Phineas Tucker had seen too many young men, and old men and big men, mad enough to bite nails, to be overawed. This was an old game. He shrugged.

"Don't make me rub it in, son," he said.

"Cut that 'son' stuff. I'm no kin to you, and don't want to be," Marriott interrupted hotly. "Tell me what's wrong, and then get out of here."

"Just as you say. *Until tomorrow,*" Phineas told him coolly. "Look about you. You have turned the ship into a hotbed of revolutionists. Letting them live aboard and fraternizing with them! They have cost you more than real labor ought."

"You're wrong. We're ahead there. It hasn't cost as much. What else?"

"You took sides with this old has-been *Presidente* and antagonized Ordaz, the real big man in San Rafael. He is in power now, and even if the firm lets you go on he would stop the work.

"This one thing is enough; but on top of all, you have hollered your head off for new equipment, and you have broken the time-limit of the contract and let the wires that supplied power to the city fail. But what use is there to go on? It is too long a brief."

"A terrible arraignment, isn't it?" said Marriott sarcastically. "I happen to know that Stith & Yoeman have never pulled off a Central American job without leeway on the time-limit. They as good as promised me more time if labor or political trouble delayed me."

"Let's not argue," said Phineas Tucker patiently. "There's not a word of it on paper. You just get this bunch of yours off the ship by tomorrow. I have arranged your passage on the next steamer. You might as well take Cord and Donovan with you. I will have my own men here."

"Is that so!" contested Marriott firmly. "Suppose I refuse to do anything of the sort? I am in possession, and this labor

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has been satisfactory in every way. I intend to get the *Nimis* off the beach. It is my first big job, and no trumped-up technicality will make me let go until she floats.

"When she is in the water I will still be in possession, and Stith & Yoeman can come across with the fifty thousand before I let one of their agents set foot on her deck."

Phineas Tucker allowed himself the satisfaction of a cackling laugh. But he was somewhat disappointed, having hoped that strong talk would be enough.

"Youth! Youth!" he chortled. "Can't you see I'm trying to be generous? I have made a deal with Ordaz. If you try any grand-standing he has a fairly well equipped army to use all the force necessary with pirates."

It was John Marriott's turn to favor the lawyer with a derisive smile. "Your friend Ordaz has use for all the force he can muster to save his neck. I saw him not an hour ago—a *prisoner*."

Phineas Tucker's reply was interrupted by McDonald Cord, who came into the office, as was his wont, without knocking, and began to talk as the door opened.

"YOU'D better cut this powwow short, John. You're needed outside. Ordaz and his crowd are down on the beach, all armed. Want our men to surrender. Want you, too, and the rest of us."

John Marriott followed his excited assistant out on to the deck, ignoring the look of satisfaction on Phineas Tucker's face in the urge of this new complication. Seth Raymond and his three servants had evidently been unable to get away with the dictator; perhaps had run into a larger body of Ordaz's men soon after he and Linda had left them. He wondered if his good friend, the resident manager, had suffered harm in the encounter and was himself a prisoner.

"They want to talk," said Ballard Donovan, who was standing watch with Garcia at the one gangway which had been left down.

"Let them," ordered Marriott, "but keep them on the ground. Cord, you take the field-gun. Get some of the men to pass up more ammunition. Send the women and children below. Station all the men with rifles on this side along the rail with a couple to watch on the other. Are you sure it is Ordaz himself?"

Linda Raymond was beside Marriott.

"I have just seen Ordaz," she said, looking very pale, "and I can fire a rifle. If anything has happened to father——"

"He is probably safe in the hills," comforted John Marriott. "Ordaz must have made a dash for it at one of the sharp turns in the road. There are enough men here for the rifles. If a fight comes, take good care. Keep below and help the native women with the wounded."

Linda Raymond hesitated.

"I want you to, Linda," pleaded Marriott. "I could never face your father if anything happened. And besides——"

"Yes," interrupted the girl quickly; "but please don't say it. Not now." And she ran to the hatch, leaving John Marriott glowing.

Below in the drill-quarters Linda gathered a dozen of the strongest native women around her and gave them a few hurried lessons in bandage-tying, sent others for a bolt of white material from the storeroom, had the ship's supply of iodin brought, and filled several tubs with water.

Meanwhile, one of Ordaz's captains, standing in hailing-distance of the ship, was demanding her surrender. Vicente Ordaz had learned a lesson in his attack on Seth Raymond's house, and kept well back. It was not well, he had found out in that trying experience, to expose the dictator of San Rafael to unnecessary peril when a lesser individual was anxious to take danger for him.

"Tell Ordaz we have no intention of surrendering," directed Marriott.

"The dictator is very angry," persisted the messenger, "but has no quarrel with misled citizens of San Rafael. If the three *Americanos* and Señorita Raymond are surrendered at once all will be forgiven."

"A thousand times no, *señor!*" cried Garcia, at John Marriott's side. "I do not trust him. It would be death for all. Worse than death for the beloved *señorita*, and for such of our women as these traitors desire. Let us resist to the last, *señor*."

"Thanks, chief," acknowledged Marriott gratefully, and shouted a defiant negative to Ordaz's spokesman.

Phineas Tucker heard the message.

"Surely you don't mean to fight!" he protested. "It is foolish. Ordaz has the

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resources of the whole country behind him. The longer you hold out and the more men killed, the worse it will be for you. This property belongs to Stith & Yoeman, and I am virtually in charge. I demand that you do as Ordaz directs."

"Will you guarantee the safety of Miss Raymond?" asked Marriott sharply.

"Certainly not," said Phineas Tucker. "From what I've heard, her father is deep in the political plots of the former *Presidente.* It's none of my affair that his actions have placed the young lady as a spoil of war."

"I thought so," said Marriott contemplatively. "Spoken like a true yellow cur. You'd better get in a safe place if you know what's good for you."

"Let me off the ship, then," begged Phineas. "I want no hand in this, even as an onlooker. When Ordaz takes the ship from you it will be time for me to come and take it over."

"All right; you may go," promised Marriott, but stopped the lawyer abruptly with a none too gentle hand on his collar as he started hurriedly for the gangway.

"Just a minute," he ordered. "Take a little turn around the deck so you will be able to tell your friend Ordaz what he is up against. Every one of my men has been trained to shoot. We have ammunition for the field-gun. If he starts anything the *Nimis* will cost considerably more than the city of El Encanto."

When released, Phineas Tucker made all speed possible between the ship and the strip of beach on which Ordaz stood with his soldiers, and even with his legs doing full and unaccustomed duty his mind was working, for Phineas had no intention of telling the dictator what a serious job it promised to be to haul his chestnuts out of the fire.

"No use waiting," he shouted to Ordaz as soon as he was near enough. "The young fool is still defiant. Says if you want him you can come and take him."

This was enough for the already exasperated Ordaz. He issued a crisp order; his men deployed, seeking shelter, and almost immediately began firing.

The answer surprized them, for the volley which came from the *Nimis* was well aimed and found more than one mark. Garcia's first shot clipped a handful of bark from the tree behind which the dictator stood.

But Ordaz was not lacking in courage. If the taking of the ship meant fight he did not balk at the cost, and was willing, if need be, to give many lives for Linda Raymond, and to get the impudent young American again in his power.

The attackers took positions behind the dredge, among the loaded cars of sand and gravel and alongside the huge ridge of dirt which had been taken from the canal.

On board the *Nimis* a row of sand-bags which Marriott had placed to keep the small children from falling overboard served as a bulwark.

The firing became spirited, but no attempt was made to rush the ship. Ordaz could well afford to take his time. He had plenty of men and ammunition, and had sent to town for two of his field-guns; while with the defenders, every man killed or wounded, and every cartridge fired, made the ship's power of resistance that much less.

Marriott, Cord and Donovan, with Garcia, went about among their men, advising caution and the careful use of ammunition, and the field-gun was held in reserve to repel a charge. The sheer side of the ship with its guarding ring of riflemen made a formidable fortress, and at the end of half an hour Ordaz had made small impression, only a few slightly wounded having been sent below to be cared for by Linda Raymond and her helpers, while Ordaz's force had suffered considerably.

"He will have to show us something better than this," grinned Cord, "or we'll declare old Garcia dictator."

And then from a well chosen position, screened by a clump of bushes, Ordaz opened fire with his artillery, placing the second shell on the *Nimis* deck and throwing into confusion and panic the men in the part of the ship where it struck.

"Quick!" cried Marriott to Cord. "Open fire with our gun and put that one out of commission."

Cord sent half a dozen shots screaming into the bushes, but by quick work Ordaz's gun-crew were able to get their piece to safety, while the second gun made a hit also.

Garcia looked worried as Ordaz's guns, moving and firing, began to riddle the upper works of the *Nimis.*

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"There are a dozen of them, *señor*," he said to Marriott.

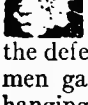
"Only two, Garcia," Marriott told him. "They move about. We'll get them soon."

McDonald Cord kept his gun going, and from behind the sand-bags the riflemen fired at every exposed head or limb. But a well aimed shot, fired boldly from a break in the earth ridge while Cord concentrated his own firing on the position of the other gun, streaked across the *Nimis's* deck and swept the field-piece over the side.

Cord himself was caught with a scrap of flying metal, and Marriott dragged him to safety behind the sand bulwarks before one of Ordaz's riflemen from the top of a tree could finish him. A bullet took off his hat as he did so, and another seared a welt along his side.

As Cord was carried below, he pointed out to the chief the tree which sheltered the sniper and a couple of the best shots speedily brought him to earth. But this was a minor victory, for both of the enemy's field-guns were now free to work their will on the *Nimis*.

"Keep behind the sand and wait, every one of you," John Marriott told the chief. "They will rush us as soon as there's no answer to the artillery. We must be ready."



THE rush came after a dozen more shots from the heavy guns; and, badly shaken by the bombardment, the defending rifles took small toll as twenty men gained the shelter of the ship's overhanging stern.

"They will try climbing up soon," said Cord, who had come back on deck with the gash on his head bandaged. "Let me pick a couple of good shots and lay for them."

"All right, if you feel up to it, Mac," said Marriott. "I'll help Donovan forward replacing the sand-bags. How are things below?"

"Miss Raymond is a wonder," was Cord's tribute. "There are a dozen wounded, and she is handling them and the native women like an old-timer. Only, womanlike, she wanted to keep me down there."

He started to crawl aft. A round metal object struck the deck beside him and rolled toward Marriott, who was instructing Garcia to round up some more women to help below. Marriott seized the smoking bomb and threw it over the side. An explosion followed before it reached the ground.

"Hand-grenades!" Marriott exclaimed. "They seem to have everything, and are close enough under the stern to heave them on board."

Donovan joined him. "I'll fix that bunch," he promised. "A little live steam is what they need," and he ran below to connect up a hose to the *Nimis's* power-plant while John Marriott instructed the men how to throw back the grenades instead of dodging away from them.

Ordaz's field-guns had ceased firing. The capture of the ship seemed only a matter of time. Ammunition was precious, and the *Nimis* too valuable to be wrecked with heavy shells.

The dictator kept well sheltered, and neither Garcia nor John Marriott had seen him since the beginning of the fight.

John Marriott had been too busy to give much thought to the probable outcome of the struggle. He only knew that he must fight on as long as strength and ammunition held out, for the surrender to Ordaz of Linda Raymond was unthinkable, and he had no doubt that to give up meant a firing-squad and blank wall for himself and his lieutenants, with probably the same fate for most of his native workers.

He was surprized when of a sudden the firing from Ordaz's men ceased entirely. Donovan had the steam-hose ready to turn on. Garcia called to him.

"A truce, *señor*. See the white flag approaching for a parley."

Marriott looked out over the sheltering bags of sand. From behind the ridge of dirt which shielded most of Ordaz's men a messenger was approaching the ship.

"Do not fire," ordered Marriott. "We will see what they want."

"Do not surrender, I beg of you, *señor*," spoke the chief. "My men prefer to die fighting for their women and their freedom."

The two men bearing the white flag came close enough to hail.

"The dictator desires no more bloodshed," called the spokesman. "He offers amnesty for all, even to the father of the Señorita Raymond who waits the firing-squad for treason."

"*No!*" whispered the chief to Marriott. "We are with you to the end, *señor*."

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"The cannon will open fire at refusal," threatened the truce-bearer, "and Señor Seth Raymond will be executed at once. The dictator has lost patience, but offers this last great mercy."

John Marriott hesitated. Linda Raymond stood beside him, worn with fatigue and anxiety. She had been just in time to hear what the truce-bearer said of her father.

"Do it!" she cried, turning to Marriott. "Please, John, if you really love me!" Her hands, but partly cleansed of their red stains of mercy, were at his shoulders. "For daddy and you and the others," she begged. "I am only one."

"No, Linda," said Marriott, reverently taking her hands away and holding them tightly. "Seth Raymond would rather die a thousand times, and so would I. This man Ordaz lies, as Garcia says. He would not keep his word."

"Listen, *señor! Mio Dios* be praised! Do you not hear? From the city there is firing. See the running about below. Something has happened! The great and good Elizalde has arrived to demand an accounting. Do you not hear the cannon? The lion has come down from the mountains!"

John Marriott did hear the sounds of battle from El Encanto. He turned to Garcia. "What do you think it means, chief?" he asked, relief and hope crowding up in a glad tide.

"I can only guess, *señor*," answered Garcia, "but the true leader of the people of San Rafael is not one to be caught off his guard by a bungler like Ordaz. My mountain-people love him, and they have doubtless flocked to his help with an army which is now fighting in the city. See, the entire force of Ordaz is going!"

With the flag of truce still flying Ordaz's men were getting together, hurrying off behind the shelter of the trees and bushes toward the city. Some twenty men under the counter came out with hands held over their heads and darted behind the ridge of earth. After some hesitation the truce-bearers planted their white flag and joined their fellows.

"It looks as if you are right," said Marriott, "and it is up to us to help. Get your men together, leave a guard of ten, and we will take the rest in. They may need us."

"Well spoken, *señor*," agreed the chief, and swiftly the orders were given, ten men with Cord and Donovan in charge detailed, and a party of twenty-five made ready to leave the ship.

What Marriott had in his mind was the rescue of Seth Raymond if such a thing were possible. He spoke to Linda of what he hoped to do, and she rewarded him with a look of gratitude and promise, which made him feel as if he had the strength of ten.

"Hurry, John," she told him. "Perhaps after all there is time."

Half-way to El Encanto they met Seth Raymond coming at a gallop with fifty well mounted, well armed native soldiers.

"Did I not tell you?" said the chief joyously, as he recognized the men as some from neighboring villages in the mountains.

"Linda?" asked Seth Raymond.

"Safe," said John Marriott; "waiting on the ship."

"I knew you would take good care of my girl until I could get here," beamed Raymond. "Thank you, my boy."

"We must hurry on, so she will know you are safe. Ordaz told us you were a prisoner."

"Ordaz always was a truth-defiler."

"*Was?*" said Marriott.

"Why, yes. I had hoped to see him before a wall, but a chief from up in the mountains who had a personal grudge beat us to it. Drilled him clean. So that's finished."

THE two men rode side by side, Marriott on one of the troopers' horses. The rest of the party followed, and one of the swiftest horsemen had been sent ahead with a message to Linda.

"What happened exactly?" asked Marriott. "I've been too busy to fill in details."

"From what I can gather, you had a tough scrap out at the ship," said Seth Raymond gravely. "Ordaz made a break for it and got away soon after you left us. I had to go on to the *Presidente*. The big trouble was that Ordaz pulled off his coup a couple of days ahead of time.

"Don Pablo had planned to have his men here in the city and squash the thing when it budded. He has been getting his men together and drilling them for months —the old fox!—his loyal mountaineer

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following that Ordaz couldn't touch, and deserters from down here that had a grievance; a good many of that kind, too. He had them scattered over his big estates with rifles and uniforms hidden away.

"When I told him about Ordaz he took me up there and showed his hand. He was about ready to bring them in when Ordaz started things. These laborers of yours are some of his crowd."

"They fought like it," said Marriott. "I want a chance to tell the *Presidente* about them. Garcia, especially."

"You shall have the opportunity," promised Raymond. "We expected more of a fight from Ordaz himself and the picked lot he had with him at the ship, but you must have given them all they wanted. They had mighty little fight left when they got into the city. A good part of the real opposition was with him.

"Elizalde is grateful for the stand you made. He will give you all the help you need to get the ship off. Then——"

Seth Raymond paused a moment queerly.

"I guess you will be leaving us."

John Marriott did not answer. Very suddenly, over the rush of joy at finding Seth Raymond safe and Linda out of danger, had come the dismal knowledge that he would have no work on the morrow, and that as a jobless, unsettled, quite strapped suitor he had little right to ask Linda Raymond to leave her father and the country she loved.

"What is it, John?" encouraged Seth Raymond, sensing his companion's depression and very naturally attributing it to a reluctance to speak for Linda for fear of hurting him.

"My company refuses to extend the time-limit," said Marriott quickly. "I have lost out. They have a man here to take over the work."

The explanation came in a rush, rather hopelessly, and Raymond offered comfort where he thought it would do the most good.

"Well, John, money isn't everything. You have made good. There are more places than this one; plenty of good firms. You stay right on with us until you land one."

But John Marriott refused to take advantage. He shook his head stubbornly.

"No," he said. "I thank you, Mr. Raymond, and I know you mean it. But New York is the place for a man looking for my kind of work. You folks have been good to me, and I—— Well, I'm coming back. I think you understand me."

"Indeed I do. Why, boy, you can have anything I've got. Anything. We'll be waiting."

They rode on silently for a few minutes, and then very quietly Seth Raymond began on another tack.

"This man, John, the one the firm sent down to gather in what you have so rightly earned, I want to know about him. What is his name?"

"A lawyer named Phineas Tucker."

A worried little frown which had been gathering between Seth Raymond's eyes smoothed out rather suddenly.

"Oh!" he said, looking up quickly. "Tell me all the details. I'd like to know how they do a thing like that."

And then, until Linda came running out with a guard from the ship to meet them, John Marriott answered a rapid fire of astute questions, but so gloomy were his reflections that he failed to gather more than friendly curiosity in Raymond's interest. To him the case seemed hopeless.

"You came just in time, daddy," said Linda, as her father patted her shoulder. "It's been pretty bad. I want to go home now, if you think it is safe."

"Safe as a church," Seth Raymond told her. "Settled forever, I hope."

Marriott left them together and went aboard the ship.

"Tomorrow at noon," Raymond called to him from the foot of the gangway.

"At noon" repeated Marriott mechanically, and climbed on deck, to begin the task of clearing the decks and caring for the dead and wounded.

All the serious cases were sent to the hospital in the city, and the others attended by a doctor in Seth Raymond's force.

Before nightfall the wreckage had been cleared away, the dredging-gear overhauled, and the men detailed to take up their work on the morrow.

John Marriott had decided that he would work until the last moment toward getting the ship afloat; and, calmer than at his first interview with the lawyer, saw nothing he could gain by defiance of the orders from Stith & Yoeman.

"But we'll go down with colors flying," was the way he expressed it to McDonald

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Cord, whose wound was not so serious as to keep him from work.

JUST before the dredge and the noisy little locomotive with its string of cars stopped work for the noon hour, Phineas Tucker came on board. Five minutes after he disappeared into the office with Marriott, Seth Raymond came up the gangplank, flanked by a couple of soldiers, and went forward. As he neared the door of the office, Phineas Tucker had so forgotten himself as to let his voice rise in a triumphant declaration.

"You may pack your baggage, the lot of you! I am in charge here from now on. No, there's no argument. It's two minutes past twelve o'clock, and the contract has expired."

John Marriott had realized the day before that to keep possession of the ship by force and finish the work would only be playing into the lawyer's hands. Stith & Yoeman would refuse payment. He could take the case to the courts as he had threatened, but the breaking of the time-limit of the contract would make his suit extremely doubtful.

"Very well, Mr. Tucker," said Marriott coldly. "I yield; the *Nimis* is yours from now on. But that needn't keep you from acting like a gentleman. Don't forget again."

Phineas Tucker began to fear that after all he might get a punch on the jaw, and began a suave apology.

Seth Raymond's unannounced entrance interrupted.

"I understand that you are in charge here," said the resident manager, his two soldiers taking up positions near the door.

"I most certainly am," said Tucker. "Here's my authority," and he produced the cablegram. "It is well past noon, as you see. I am only waiting for these men to clear out. The work has been muddled from the first. Presidente Elizalde sent you, doubtless."

"Yes, he did," said Seth Raymond quietly. "You, I take it, are Stith & Yeoman's accredited agent? You have credentials so proving?"

"I have," said Phineas Tucker. "Here they are, in black and white. It won't take us long to get together. I'm glad I've struck somebody in this country who has some respect for law."

"Yes," said Raymond; "the law is a good thing."

He spoke a few words in Spanish to the two soldiers. They stepped to either side of Mr. Phineas Tucker and took his arms.

"What's the idea?" asked Tucker, trying to smile.

"There seems to be considerable authority around here today," Seth Raymond replied, flipping out the official-looking paper. "It becomes my duty as a special agent of Presidente Elizalde to put you under arrest for aiding and abetting a certain deceased scoundrel named Ordaz in a revolution. Incidentally, the Government is taking over the ship *Nimis* for damages. Here's my authority." He pointed to the two soldiers.

Phineas Tucker let out a cry very much like a bellow. "What's this nonsense? We don't care two bits for your little tom-fool laws. I'll have the United States on your back in two minutes."

"And off again," said Raymond. "How about the five hundred rifles you smuggled in to help arm a revolution against a recognized Government?"

Tucker backed down, began to think of blank walls and firing-squads, and very shortly was begging to be allowed to take the next steamer home.

"I'll do what I can," promised Raymond, winking at the startled John Marriott, "but I can't release you. You will have to see the *Presidente*."

He spoke to the two soldiers, and Mr. Phineas Tucker was led away to El Encanto's most efficient jail.

"Well, John, my boy," said Seth Raymond when they had gone, "how's that for a man who has sworn off on mixing in?"

"I don't understand it all," said John Marriott. "How does this affect the work? What am I to do? I take it that the ship now belongs to the republic of San Rafael, if you can make the papers stick."

"Stick!" said Seth Raymond. "They'll stick until doomsday! We've got the goods on them right. This boss of yours has been double-crossing you for a month, has had this fellow here for two weeks hand in glove with Ordaz, trying to delay you.

"You are to keep right on with the work. Get the ship off and into the water. This seizure is backed by a bill for damages of a hundred thousand dollars, and Stith &

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Yoeman will have to pay it before the vessel is delivered to them.

"The bill isn't exorbitant, for in it is your fifty thousand for the work, and the damage and expense that the *Presidente* suffered by the firm's help to Ordaz takes care of the other fifty thousand. Any court anywhere would pay it, and more. They know it.

"Besides, when they see they can get a ship worth close to half a million, as tonnage runs, they will pay a hundred thousand without a word. Where they fell down was in getting piggish and greedy, trying to gouge an honest contractor out of what was rightly coming to him, on a technicality of their own making.

"There must have been some personal spite in it, too, but I don't know about that. Perhaps Yeoman didn't like your father, after all."

"That may be," said Marriott, and asked again to make sure that he had heard aright—

"Then I'm to get the ship off?"

"Of course," said Raymond. "The republic of San Rafael will collect from Stith & Yoeman and pay you your fifty thousand. We will use the other fifty thousand to help build an electric light plant for the city. They won't have one when the *Nimis* is moved, you know.

"Now it strikes me, John, that you will be out of a job about the time you get paid off, and I am wondering."

"You needn't," said John Marriott, getting the whole marvelous scheme at last. "Let *me* build the power-plant. I'll do it as cheaply as any one."

"Now you're talking business," said Raymond. "Get your bunch started on this overdue job and come along up-town with me; we'll see the *Presidente* and get the papers drawn."

On the way up-town they passed Seth Raymond's house, and an increasing nervousness in the young man's manner found voice.

"Is Linda at home?" he asked.

"Yes," said Raymond. "I've been so full of business that I forget to tell you that she will want you to come over to-night for dinner."

"I'd like to go over to see if she's all right after her trying experience," said Marriott somewhat lamely.

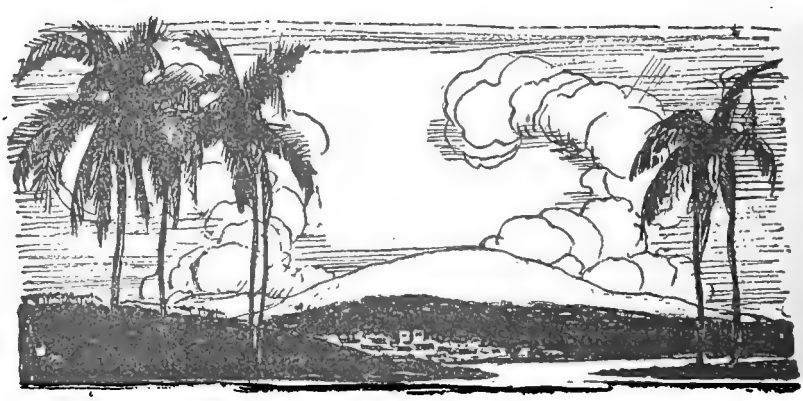
"Go ahead. A mere *Presidente* won't mind waiting a few minutes."

But Marriott was gone, and had urged his horse to a gallop in the first fifty yards.

Raymond saw his daughter run to the gate to meet him, and he turned away with a little choke in his throat. But he was smiling with the best of good humor when he explained to his good friend Don Pablo that the young man would be with them shortly, and that now since there was a breathing-space he would suggest one of the iced ginger drinks.

Shortly, through the sparkling amber liquid, the twinkling eyes of the old *Presidente* met the resident manager's in a perfect understanding.

"To their happiness, Señor Seth," he said, and the two drained their glasses as they heard John Marriott's quick step in the hall outside.



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The Camp-Fire

A Free-To-All Meeting-Place For Readers, Writers, And Adventurers

HOOP-SNAKES, snake-bite remedies and General Custer. My personal inclination when anybody mentions hoop-snakes is to cross my fingers, but I'm unable to prove that there is no such thing as a hoop-snake, not having been everywhere all the time. So if the rest of you say there are hoop-snakes, all right, I'll be a believer.

Hollywood, Calif.

Having read the article in "Camp-Fire" on snakes and remedies for snake-bites, I just couldn't help writing a little story, which I hope may help some one.

MANY years of my young life were spent in the West and I have had quite a bit of experience with snakes, also learning of an antidote for snake-bite which I say "can't be beat." The article to which I refer, gave remedies for snake bite, and among other things, gave a list of what "should be carried by every prospector going into snake infested regions." It seems to me that said article must have been written by some one endeavoring to boost the drug-store business.

The best remedy that I have found for snake-bite, or the bite of any insect, is common coal-oil, (kerosene) or else turpentine. My idea is that any one going tramping in snaky regions should carry a small bottle of either the coal-oil or the turpentine. When bitten, the liquid should be poured on to the wound, or sopped on with a cloth.

On the plains in the early days this was the only antidote used by the plainsmen or the stockmen, and was certainly used very effectively. Of course this liquid must be applied at once, the same as any other remedy. All these medicines, syringes, tourniquets, etc. are absolutely unnecessary, if either the coal-oil or turpentine can be obtained.

I can recall one case where a man was bitten on the hand by a rattlesnake, and the only remedy was to suck the bite, spit out the substance, and apply a cud of good old tobacco.

SAW no mention made of the hoop-snake which used to be found in some parts of the Middle West States. This snake would catch its tail in its mouth and roll, like a hoop, hence the name. It was stated on one occasion, that one of these snakes ran against a tree and its poison killed the tree. Has no one heard of the rattle-snake weed, which was used successfully in combating snake bite?

SOMETIME ago, at Camp-Fire, a writer mentioned that Custer had committed suicide, rather than be captured, at the battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. Any one who was acquainted with George A. Custer and knows his history from early life until his death, will say that he would be the last man to take his own life under any circumstances.

Any one who undertakes to belittle Custer's character or reputation as a military leader, in view of his brilliant career as an officer in the War of the Rebellion and as a great leader in the war against the Indians, certainly must have a prejudiced disposition toward General Custer, or envy his remarkable and useful career in the service of the United States Government—BENJ. M. BLOOD.

ANOTHER point of view as to what is the spirit of adventure. The question when originally started at Camp-Fire by Edgar Young was "What is the spirit of adventure, biologically considered?" But there is no reason why we shouldn't discuss it in any of its aspects we please.

U.S.S. *New Mexico.*

Our comrade Barry Scobee claims that the spirit of adventure is play. He points out that if an automobile party were held up and all their available funds taken it would not be adventure, but experience. On the other hand, if they fool the robber and get away with it, they have not had an experience, but an adventure. In my opinion he is wrong both ways. If the auto party that had their money

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stolen had sold the machine and fought their difficulties in a man's way, and gone on looking for their land, found it and made a home there in spite of auto robbers, etc., they would have been true adventurers.

What is more, there is a little curiosity in adventure, and there must be a little touch of danger. The more, the better. If there is no danger, it is like 2.75, flat.

Light adventure, if there is such a thing, is play, like taking a tour around the world in some finely fitted out passenger ship. Real adventure must have its dangers and hardships, like leaving N. A. for Calcutta on an old tramp with one suit of clothes, a cargo of, say, T.N.T., and subs waiting out off Sandy Hook. All hardships are laughed at when they are over with and one is walking up Broadway well supplied with money and time.

Adventure is waiting with a thrill for the unknown around the corner, and who knows (or cares) the great adventure death?—E. E. MARSH.

IN CONNECTION with his story in this issue we raised a question as to whether a certain expression used by some of the characters was really in use at the time of the story, but is seems as if W. C. Tuttle were justified:

Regarding the slang expression, "I'd tell a man." Now, I don't know how far back that expression dates, but I'd tell a man that it goes back at least fifteen or eighteen years. Perhaps it was the first real slang expression to hit cow-land. The expressions, "I'd kiss a pig," "I'd smoke a lamp," came about the same time.

The first time I ever saw the mooted expression in print was early in about 1900 or 1901. I happened to see the expression and it read so homelike that I read the tale.—TUT.

A REPLY to an inquiry from one of us concerning Adams and his lost mine.

Garrison-on-Hudson, New York.

In the "Camp-Fire" of the *Adventure* of 3rd., October, 1919, I saw a request for information from M. M. Coleman about a man named Adams who had been with others to a very rich gold mine known to the Apache Indians in N. W. New Mexico.

Replying to the inquiry, I will say that I have a story first hand from credible sources concerning a very rich mine known to the Apache Indians of North Western New Mexico but it is a silver mine and is supposed to be within the boundaries of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. At the present moment I have not my notes on the subject so am quoting from memory and a thorough acquaintance with the story as it came to me.

A MAN named Adams with a party made up of civilians and soldiers were led by an Indian or half-breed guide to an extremely rich silver mine in North Western New Mexico. This party was attacked and wiped out with the exception of Adams and one or possibly two companions who reached safety at a U. S. Army post some distance away. Adams tried to return to the mine on several subsequent occasions but was unable to correctly find his way. Later some whites made a deal with Victorio, who promised to lead them to this mine and started to do so but the party was turned back by a large war party of Apaches. The mine since has not, so far as I know, been reached by whites. Some have tried it, but were all turned back by the Apaches.

When I go West I will get my notes and send you a more thorough account of the story.—AMEDÉE LA V. REYBURN, JR.

A LETTER from a very, very rare bird—a man who used to read our magazine and never even look at "Camp-Fire." But finally he tried it and now is a member in good standing—and a good American. I can't agree that ours is the best governed country in the world, but if it isn't it's *our* fault, yours and mine, for we have the opportunity to make it all it should be. We have democracy to that extent at least—we can make our government register our wishes and opinions, lawfully and without force and riot, if only we *will*. Can't do it just by wishing. It takes work. But we *can* do it if we *will*.

Anyhow, it's our country and its government is as good as we are. And a —— fine country at that.

The "editorial" question he speaks of was a suggestion that, before we go colonizing in other countries, we'd better consider our own country's need of us.

Vancouver, B. C.

I have been an irregular reader of *Adventure* for some time, buying it in preference to other publications when I wanted something that would really rest my tired brain.

I NEVER paid much attention to the "Camp-Fire" section, hardly ever looking at it, until the issue of September 18. Growing tired of reading I threw the book down. It happened to open at the Camp-Fire page and, remaining open, my eye caught a heading and a few more words that interested me, and picking the book up again, discovered that I had lost much by not reading it in the previous issues that had passed through my hands, for it appealed to me at once very strongly; I wanted to be a member and break into the circle.

THAT'S what I am trying to do now, and if my attempt is crude, I hope you will pardon my maiden effort and not kick me out the first time. Among the Camp-Fire contributions, that which interested me most was Dr. Sargent's reply to queries of would-be Latin-American emigrants, and particularly the editorial comment on same. I feel like the editor, and will answer his question most emphatically in the affirmative.

We Americans, especially native-born sons, certainly *do* owe the little old U. S. not only something, but everything.

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What wander-bug entices us to leave the land of our birth and seek asylum in foreign lands, when our native land is the most free and best governed country on the face of the globe?

Did you (who have the wanderlust for a new home) ever stop to think why you wish to leave a country where the government is stable, and the people more free than any other nationality, for a country where the majority of the people are ignorant peons?

Why do hundreds of thousands of emigrants come from the eastern continent to find homes and better conditions—people of all nationalities races, and colors?

And nearly all stay; and their native land knows them no more.

Their families grow up and are educated here, and become American citizens; and know no home but the land of the Stars and Stripes.

IT seems to me that the United States has range of climate, productions, topographical and geological conditions, to suit the most fastidious; if they only endeavor to find the conditions they desire within the borders of their native land instead of looking to foreign lands. There is plenty of reliable information to be obtained in regard to all parts, for the asking, and many opportunities, in any vocation; and the best and most reliable source of information (unlike most foreign countries) is from the Government bureaus.

I left my native land (the U. S.—and a native-born citizen too)—thinking to better my condition and environment, but as yet have failed to find the Mecca of my expectations; and while not a groucher by any means, and having no fault to find, if I ever again gain a foothold in the good old U. S., I will stick.—E. B. SAFFORD.

OUR Camp-Fire seems to be gradually exploding the Gila Monster as to the deadly quality of its bite. We have already had some strong evidence from recognized scientific authority and now there comes to Camp-Fire a letter from Dr. H. C. Yarrow, formerly curator of the reptile department at the U. S. National Museum, more commonly referred to as the Smithsonian Institution. This, especially considering the thoroughness of the tests made, would seem by itself, conclusive evidence.

Also note Dr. Yarrow's word of warning concerning permanganate of potash. One of you who claims no scientific knowledge of the subject and bases his statements only on the early day remedies of the Indians and plainsmen, has recently written in similarly discrediting this remedy from the standpoint of practical experience. And one of our physician comrades makes out a strong case proving the tourniquet is the only essential part of the treatment.

The following from Dr. Yarrow is from his series of papers on "Snake Bite and its Antidote." In itself it seems definitely to settle the question of the deadliness of the Gila Monster's poison. The other experiments referred to indicated venomous qualities, but there seems no authenticated case of the poison being the direct cause of a human being's death.

Washington, D. C.

I have read with much interest the discussions in your interesting magazine regarding the Gila Monster and am sending you the results of our experiments at the Smithsonian some years since. The reptile which bit Dr. Shufeldt was one of those whose saliva was used in our tests and you will see by the report which I send you we failed to determine the so-called venomous property of the saliva. In Dr. Shufeldt's case we believe the mental shock caused his symptoms. I have yet to discover an authoritative case of death from the bite of the *Heloderma suspectum* and rather think that, if deaths have occurred, they have been due to the enormous quantities of bad whisky with which the parties were deluged.

Make such use of this report as you see fit.—H. C. YARROW.

P.S. I may add that I have handled a number of Helodermas and have never known them to show a malignant disposition or desire to bite if gently held.

A Word of Warning:

Let no man believe he has a positive antidote to the bites of venomous reptiles in Potassa permanganas. It is a fallacy and has been proved so at the Smithsonian Institution.

BITE OF THE GILA MONSTER

BY DR. H. C. YARROW

ON Feb. 7, 1883, Drs. S. Weir Mitchell and Edward T. Reichart read a paper before the college of Physicians of Philadelphia, entitled, A Partial Study of the Poison of *Heloderma Suspectum Cope*, the Gila Monster, in which the statement was made that after several experiments with the saliva of this reptile, they had come to the conclusion that it possessed strongly venomous properties. This had been suspected by some naturalists, from the fact that this lizard possessed anterior deciduous grooved teeth, which communicated by ducts with large glands near the angle of the lower jaw.

All sort of conflicting reports have been published from time to time regarding this reptile, some observers claiming that it is deadly venomous, others believing it perfectly harmless; in fact, in some parts of the Southwest it was kept as a household pet. Bocourt and Dumeril mention the bad name it has in Mexico, and Sumichrast states that the natives hold it in the utmost terror and consider it more fatal than any serpent. A fowl bitten by it died in twelve hours, with bloody fluid exuding from its mouth, the wound being of a purple tint. A cat bitten was very ill, but recovered, remaining thin and weak. Sir John Lubbock reports that a *Heloderma* sent him killed a frog in a few minutes, a guinea-pig in three minutes. Dr. R. W. Shufeldt, of the United States Army, reports serious symptoms after having received a bite on the right thumb, but no permanent disability followed.

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THE writer has for several years endeavored to trace out an authentic account of death resulting from the bite of a Gila Monster, and the following is all the evidence in his possession. The first account was secured through Dr. S. P. Guiberson, of Ventura County, Cal., and is as follows:

"G. J. Hayes, a miner in from the Frazer mine, says that in 1878, or '80 in Tip-Top Mining Camp, Arizona, he saw a Gila monster bite a man by the name of Johnny Bostick, who at the time was under the influence of liquor. That he took hold of the *Heloderma* and shoved his finger at it, and the reptile seized his finger, and its jaws had to be pried open before he could disengage his finger. The *Heloderma* was 22 in. long and lay on the card-table. It was also seen by a man named Lou Smith, and a lot of Italian miners. Immediately Mr. John Bostick drank large quantities of liquor, and from the effects of the bite one side was paralyzed, and he died in about three months, April 19, 1878. I hereby certify that the above statement is correct. (Signed) G. J. Hayes."

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a notary public, this 19th day of April, 1886.—S. P. Guiberson, Notary Public for Ventura county, Cal.

The second affidavit, which follows, differs somewhat from the first but relates to the same individual. The query is, was the *Heloderma* bite the cause of death or was it the whisky so lavishly administered?

State of California, County of Ventura.—R. C. Carleton, who first being duly sworn, deposes and says that he was present at the time, and knows of his own knowledge, that Johnny Bostick, of Tip-Top, Arizona, was bitten by a Gila Monster, from the effects of which he afterward died. That the Gila Monster seized one of the fingers or thumb of the said Johnny Bostick, and that in order to disengage the reptile the boys cut its head off, that deponent thinks it occured in 1883. Subscribed and sworn to this day of December, 1886.—R. C. Carleton. S. P. Guiberson, Notary Public., (A true Copy.)

IN conversing with Dr. F. V. Ainsworth, U. S. A. who has had a large experience in Arizona, upon the subject of the bite of the Gila Monster, he informed the writer that he had heard of a case of death from the bite of this reptile, but that his brother Frank K. Ainsworth was conversant with the details, and he obligingly offered to write and procure full details. From the letter which follows, it will be seen that the case is reported by Dr. G. E. Goodfellow of Tombstone, Arizona, to Dr. Ainsworth:

Tombstone, July 23, 1887.—My dear Ainsworth: I at last am ready to reply to your letter concerning "snakes." The Fairbanks case was as follows: Yeager, about 55 years of age, was in May, 1885, in Fairbanks, Arizona Territory, bitten by a Gila Monster. He, to prove the innocuousness of the beast, put his left thumb and forefinger into its mouth, and he was bitten. He was immediately loaded to the guards with whisky—it happened in a saloon—and he seemed all right, save for a slight numbness and swelling in the hand and arm. He sat down in a chair in the saloon, talked with those around for an hour. The crowd thinning out, he seemed to drop asleep. In about an hour more, the saloon keeper spoke to him, but not making a reply, he was taken hold of and found to be dead. I was sent for, but before I could leave received a second message announcing his death. He was a man addicted to the use of liquor, and so far as I can ascertain had been on a prolonged spree for months. Whether he died of the reptilian poison or a combination of whisky, disease and Gila Monster I can not say.

About four years ago on the lower San Pedro I was informed that a man had been bitten in the foot while in the field and died within three hours. I could neither prove nor disprove the case.

That the Gila Monster is a poisonous lizard can not now be denied. That its bite is fatal uniformly is open to discussion. I have always considered that they were a trifle more poisonous than the scorpion, tarantula and centipede, not even approaching the rattlesnake, and I have been accustomed to regard the bite of the first three mentioned as little worse than the stinging of a bee or wasp. I have known of bee-stings killing, but though I have seen many bitten, and have had a personal experience as well, never have I known of a death to occur from the bite of a scorpion, tarantula or centipede. That they can kill under conditions I am convinced. Very respectfully, G. B. Goodfellow.

These accounts are the only authentic ones the writer has been able to gather, after ten years of constant labor and research.

ON THE other side it may be stated that Mr. Horan, the superintendent of the National Museum, has been bitten several times by this lizard without serious results following.

The first experiment of Mitchell and Reichart was as follows: "About 4 minims (of saliva) was diluted with one-half cubic centimeter of water, and thrown into the breast muscles of a large strong pigeon at 4:25 P.M. In three minutes the pigeon was rocking on its feet and walking unsteadily. At the same time the respiration became rapid and short, and at the fifth minute feeble; at the sixth minute the bird fell in convulsions with dilated pupils, and was dead before the end of the seventh minute. The first contrast to the effect of venom was shown when the wound made by the hypodermic needle was examined. There was not the least trace of local action, such as is so characteristic of the bite of serpents, and especially of the *Crotalidae*. The muscles and nerves responded perfectly to weak induced currents and to mechanical stimuli. The heart was arrested in the fullest diastole, and was full of firm black clots. The intestines looked congested. The spine was not examined." A number of other experiments made by these experienced investigators left no doubt in their minds as to the terribly venomous character of the *Heloderma* saliva.

BEFORE giving notes of the experiments made at the National Museum, it may be well to describe the process by which Drs. Mitchell and Reichart obtained the saliva, and our own. The first consisted in "provoking the reptile to bite on a saucer edge, which it was not disposed to do. When once it had seized the saucer it was hard to pull it away, so powerful was the grip of the lizard's jaws. After a moment a thin fluid-like saliva dripped in small quantities from the lower jaw. It was slightly tinted with blood, due to the violence of the bite, nnd it had a faint and not unpleasant aromatic odor. The secretion thus collected from the mouth was distinctly alkalin in contrast to serpent venoms, which are all alike acid."

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OUR own method consisted in forcing the lizard to bite upon a piece of artist's gum, which being elastic and yielding, did no injury to the teeth and afforded a fair hold. So soon as the saliva appeared to be flowing it was carefully swabbed up with pledgets of absorbent cotton, which were washed out with glycerin, and in this way we had no difficulty in securing all of the fluid needed. It was preserved in glycerin the same as our serpent venom.

The first experiment, Nov. 8, 1887, was as follows:

Nov. 8, 1887—12:17 P.M.—held left hind leg of rabbit to *Heloderma*, which grasped it with his teeth, and held on for three-fourths of a minute, biting fiercely.

1:30 P.M.—Rabbit a little lame, but enjoyed eating as much as before.

3 P.M.—No result so far.

Nov. 9.—Rabbit appears to be perfectly well with the exception of a very slight lameness of the left hind-leg, due to the lacerated wound made by the lizard's teeth.

12:30 P. M.—Held leg of another rabbit near the mouth of a different *Heloderma* from the one used in the former experiment, and irritated the reptile until he took hold. In this case the rabbit's leg was seized several times and bitten to the bone, the reptile being unwilling to let go. There was a copious flow of saliva, which ran over the teeth wounds and was rubbed in by the experimenters, care have been taken to remove the hair from the rabbit's leg. In fact this was done in every case, as it was feared the thick fur might prevent the saliva from reaching the wounds.

3 P. M.—No result.

Nov. 10.—No result.

Nov. 11.—No result except slight lameness.

Nov. 17.— 12:45 P.M.—Injected three minims of solution of *Heloderma* saliva in leg of hen (brown). Respiration somewhat increased, but no other symptoms noticed.

2:30 P.M.—Fowl in about the same condition; respiration slightly increased and breathes with beak partly open.

Nov. 18.—Fowl appears to be entirely recovered.

Nov. 20.—Chicken completely recovered.

In this case the increased respiration was probably due to the fact that the chicken being a very noisy one it became necessary to compress its throat to avoid annoying other workers in the Museum.

Nov. 22—12:19 P.M.—Injected ten minims of solution of *Heloderma* saliva and ten minims of water into left breast of another hen. This chicken was very thin but perfectly healthy, and had been used for two rattlesnake venom experiments with ligature and recovered.

12:25 P.M.—Increase of respiration, wants to lie down, defecates, feathers ruffled.

12:30 P.M.—Panting heavily; peculiar outward and inward movement of rectum; eyes closed and very drowsy.

Nov. 28.—Chicken entirely recovered, and has been so for several days.

12:35 P.M.—Injected 25 minims of solution of *Heloderma* saliza into left leg of another hen.

12:40 P.M.—Hen lying down, respiration quickened, and breathes with mouth open.

2:30 P.M.—Chicken still lying down and breathing fast.

Nov. 29.—11 A.M.—Chicken in same condition as yesterday; will not eat.

Nov. 30.—11 A.M.—Chicken improving; eats a little.

Dec. 1.—11 A.M.—Chicken appears to be all right; eats well.

Dec. 2.—11 A.M.—Chicken entirely recovered.

Dec. 5.—12:15 P.M.—Injected 25 minims of solution *Heloderma* saliva into breast of chicken, same quantity into right leg, same quantity into left leg, making in all 75 minims. In short time. fowl had copious watery discharge *per anum*, with a curious oscillatory movement of that opening.

12:25.—Chicken lying down with its feathers much ruffled.

Dec. 6.—Chicken found dead. This fowl had been used for previous experiments, and was very thin and weak, and it is by no means certain whether the copious diarrhea, probably produced by the glycerin did not cause its death.

Dec. 5.—Forced largest *Heloderma* to bite a chicken on the leg (from which feathers had been removed several times. There was a copious flow of saliva and many lacerated wounds.

Dec. 6.—Chicken seems perfectly well, no swelling or local manifestations whatever.

Dec. 7.—Chicken perfectly well.

Fearing that possibly the glycerin solution of venom (2 drs. of saliva to 6 drs. of glycerin) was too weak or had lost its strength through keeping on Dec. 8 the following conclusive experiment was performed:

12:15 P.M.—Forced open the jaws of the largest and most savage *Heloderma* and collected upon a piece of absorbent cotton from ten to fifteen drops of fresh saliva. An incision was made in the breast of a chicken and the cotton placed in it and allowed to remain.

Dec. 10.—The chicken appears perfectly well; no sign of indisposition or local manifestations whatever. Wound appears to be healing kindly.

Jan. 20, 1888.—Wound in breast has been healed for some time, the cotton remains where it was placed and can be felt encysted under the skin and has produced no injury.

April 4.—The chicken alive and healthy with the cotton still *in situ*.

THIS experiment would seem to show that a large amount of the *Heloderma* saliva can be inserted into the tissues without producing any harm and it is still a mystery to the writer how Drs. Mitchell and Reichart and himself obtained entirely different results. Were it not for the well known accuracy and carefulness of Dr. Mitchell it might be supposed possibly that the hypodermic syringe used in his experiment contained a certain amount of *Crotalus* or cobra venom, but under the circumstances such a hypothesis is entirely untenable. Moreover no local symtoms were manifested as would have been the case had venom been inserted. Both the Gila Monsters were good-sized active specimens, full of vigor, secreting a considerable amount of saliva, and we can hardly suppose that the short captivity they had suffered could have so modified their saliva as to render it innocuous.

AN INTERESTING bit concerning his story in this issue from Farnham Bishop:

Berkeley, California.

I was asked to take part in just such an expedition as the one described—except that there were

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to be a half a dozen white men in it instead of two, and Mannlichers instead of Winchesters. The Chucunaque had not been consulted beforehand, but the adventurer who hatched up the scheme felt sure of finding a feud between them and the San Blas. He declared his intention of going there anyhow, and then burning our boat behind us—giving Cortez no credit for inventing the stratagem. Then, he declared, the Chucunaque could not drive us out and would accept our offer to help fight their enemies. Maybe they would, and maybe they would have told us to dive off the dock and swim back. It sounded like an exceedingly interesting sort of trip, but he never found the recruits and capital to undertake it. Probably the Zone Police put a spoke in his wheel; they have a way of finding out about such expeditions and stopping them before they start.

As for *Henry Clay*, there is more than one story about an American college graduate coming down to the Isthmus and being greeted by a class-mate wearing a breech-clout and a derby hat.—FARNHAM BISHOP.

THIS man needs our friendly help. The chances are slight that publishing his letter may help him to learn his identity, but every chance is worth taking. At least he wants to hear from us and that much we can do. I regret very sincerely that, in the mass of Camp-Fire letters, his did not get the immediate printing I should have given it, though even so it could not have seen publication for several months after it was written. I only hope his temporary address will see to the forwarding of letters.

If Mr. Stuart sees this and has not already found out who he is, I suggest that he send us his personal description and whatever other facts he can furnish. By publishing these data to the Camp-Fire there is at least a chance worth taking that some one among us may be able to give him a clue. There are, by the usual method of computing a magazine's readers, somewhere around a million who read our magazine, there seem almost none of them who do not read "Camp-Fire"and the vast majority seem to read it first. That makes quite a few to draw on when seeking information or trying to run down a mystery.

I would like very much to enter my name and address for letters from readers of *Adventure*.

I AM a case of "shell shock" causing loss of memory. I have been in this game (just finished) since August 7, 1914, and am at present returning soldiers to their homes and loved ones. I am at present on one of His Majesty's Australian Transports bound for England.

We left Wellington, New Zealand, homeward bound on the 7th day of August, 1919, arriving at Panama September 1, 1919. Passed through canal in seven hours and left Cristobal, C. Z., after coaling, September 2, 1919, to bunker at Newport News, Va.

I am like many another soldier of the French Foreign Legion. I went in to forget and I am afraid now I have forgotten only too well. My birth given at time of enlistment was December 31, 1896, so I am only 23 years of age. I *do* know what my real name is. The suggestion is that I am an American. Evidently all bridges were burnt behind me when I enlisted. My mind is a bit hazy as to a good several things that I seem to have taken part in. But I have the decorations received on the field, some with my name and date engraved on them, so I must have taken part in the sorties. When talking with boys that were with me at the time I seem to remember the incident quite well.

The doctors say memory may (?) come back in time.

I would send for one of your indentification-cards but my address is only temporary. Wishing you the best of luck and open trails I beg to sign—COURAGE STUART, Union Jack Club, Waterloo Rd., London, England.

SEVERAL queries and some interesting bits from one of our Western comrades:

San Diego, Cal.

Can any old adventurer tell us anything about "Port" Stockton, who terrorized Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado during the latter seventy's and early eighty's? If I am not mistaken he was killed in a pitched battle with a posse in the Animas Valley between Animas Forks (now Durango) and Farmington. I have forgotten the year, but was at that time with the Government Survey, establishing the boundaries of the Navajo Indian Reservation.

I WAS also near the place that "Billie the kid" was killed at the time of the killing, and Pat Garrett was in my camp for more than a week just prior to the climax. Just in this connection I wish to state that a few months ago I met with a man who was for a time "Billie's" chief lieutenant. I was intimately acquainted with him in Las Vegas and east of there. We had a long and (for me) a very interesting conversation about the old times and he told me where John Rudebaugh was about five years ago engaged in the meat-market business. He told me many things which cleared up doubts about certain episodes of Billie's career. I do not mention his name as he is still living hale and active and highly respected.

CAN any one tell what has become of Nellie Cashman, one of the most noted characters of the extreme South-west, 30 to 35 years ago? I was on one expedition which she headed to a Lower California Gold-rush in 1885. I believe she went to the first Klondyke excitement. Heard indirectly that she was running a saloon and gambling-house in San Francisco just before the Quake. I know that at one time she ran a hotel in Nogales, Arizona, and wore a six-gun when she went shopping.

Jerry Burke followed the line of the Atlantic & Pacific (now the Santa Fé) Railroad during construction. He was not a bandit, just the reverse;

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nevertheless he did some very neat gun work at Flagstaff before the R.R. got there and was present when Blind Jim and Jim made the big killing.

Is there any reader of *Adventure* that was there? If so I would be pleased to compare notes with him. —PHIL SNODGRASS.

OFTEN in cutting out from a letter for Camp-Fire the parts that contain words of praise for our magazine I find quite a job on my hands to avoid marring the continuity and general bearing of the letter as a whole. The following letter from our comrade Captain James Moorhead begins by stating, more at length, that he likes our magazine because the people in the stories are "real men with good red blood in their veins" and then goes on as quoted below. And a very interesting letter it is.

New York.

. . . To some people that have never been away far from home this might read much like fiction, but in my turn going to sea I often met just with such men as often appear in *Adventure*—men afraid of nothing. Probably I could fill a book on just such a subject as "brave men I have met," especially in the packet ship days in the Western Ocean trade, when the rule was a word and a blow, where there was always continual trouble between men and officers, the sailor as a rule getting the worst end of the deal, but occasionally a good man would crop up in the forecastle able to take care of himself. And when such a man ran against the bucko second mate and got the best of him, he was usually taken aft and the ex-bucko second mate was sent forward, a broken man for the rest of the voyage.

SOME time ago I wrote you a letter on the wreck of the schooner *Kochcko* on the coast of Magdalene Islands, as your characters in the story (I think it was called "Wave Crest," by Samuel Alexander White) were so vivid to me that I really thought I had come in contact with the same men and characters, that the writer of that story had in mind.

Again, in reading November 3rd issue, "Mule Skinner Dynamite," by C. M. Cosby, takes my money. I have many times in the course of my sea life come across just such men as, *Handsome Joe Kerrigan*, *Sheridan* and *Donald McDonald*, especially the latter. So I shall try to depict a few lines on life on board ship in the early sixties, where my hero might be twin brother to your *Donald McDonald*.

IN the early sixties quoted above sailors were a happy-go-lucky lot, tough you might say, but a simple lot of fellows at that, and the first day out from Liverpool or New York was cleaning-up day (especially on packet ships), when the officers measured up the crew to find out just what they measured up to. The men were used to the rough treatment, and if the officers could not carry it out they were looked down upon by Jack, but with all, after the first day out, they were sailors, men who could do anything with a piece of rope or a palm and needle.

Then there was the boss of the forecastle, who was always looked up to, and always got first cut of the old salt hoss when the mess kid came to the forecastle and who got his title by brawn and muscle and remained so until a better man cropped up, and so the happy days went on.

AROUND the latter part of '65 I joined a little full-rigged ship in Liverpool, called the *Lammergeier*, bound to New Orleans with general cargo, and was probably one of the first ships to tow up the Mississippi after the peace was declared. I was only a lad at the time, but although I had seen lively times on board packet ships ere this, I shall never forget the high jinks we had on board this ship, The captain was a Liverpool Englishman, the officers were a mixture of Irish and Scotch, while the crew were full-blooded Irish.

Our carpenter (commonly called Chips) was also a Liverpool man and as fine a built man as you would want to meet, over six feet tall and built in proportion. He was the captain's pet.

In the forecastle was also the pet of the crew, also a fine built fellow as you could meet anywhere, Nat Laughlin, six feet tall, built in proportion, a bunch of muscles and smart as a steel trap.

The officers were a quiet lot and not looking for any trouble with the crew, so all the scrapping was done forward and during the passage from Liverpool to New Orleans. Our friend Laughlin had taken care of most every member of the crew forward and naturally was looked up to as the boss and the pet of the forecastle. What more natural than that Chips, the captain's pet, should look with envy at Laughlin the forecastle pet? And although we made the passage without any friction, we all knew the day would surely come when these two gladiators would meet and settle the supremacy.

WE were laying at the Levee at New Orleans and, after discharging our cargo, began to load cotton for Liverpool. The men who loaded cotton in these days were commonly called Cotton-Jammers, and a pretty lively bunch they were. They very soon came to know of the feeling between these two men, which only needed a spark, which came one Sunday afternoon.

Chips and I were lying on the after hatch, reading, when our friend Laughlin came on board and, passing us where we lay, announced there was no man on board the ship he could not lick, and walked forward.

It only took a few minutes for Chips to think the matter over, when he jumped forward, taking me with him and armed with his adze to see fair play, but Laughlin had gone ashore.

After supper the captain advised his pet to retire and rest and be ready for the fight next morning at daylight.

About 8 P.M. the sailors all returned on board with their champion and, as Chips refused to come out until morning, Laughlin was rubbed down and put to bed by his followers and the fight staged for 6 A.M. Monday morning.

THE news flew like fire along the Levee and you can rest assured we had a real audience as the Cottom-Jammers were out in force. Work on the ships all stopped, to see the great fight on the ship *Lammergeier*. The Levee was black with spectators, so here we had a prize fight on a ship's deck, staged to perfection, seats free, no purse, and—which would be the envy of the sporting fraternity today—no

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police interference. A marvelous exhibition, carried out to perfection. Of course, if such a thing was attempted today all hands from captain down would be landed in jail.

5.30 A.M., as the second mate called all hands to turn to and wash decks, the mate came out and ordered all work stopped and to get ready for the fight.

Our two gladiators came out on deck ready, naked bodies, light pants, heavy boots, bare knuckles; the officers were back of Chips, sailors back of Laughlin, rubbing him down with a decoction of rum and resin, while the captain took care of his pet, keeping out of sight but passing out a drink and watching the fight.

Timekeepers were arranged and handlers, etc., and the men were placed abreast the mainmast on center of deck, the mate put up his hand and the timekeeper called "Time!" and the ball was on.

FIRST round: Chips led and was followed by Laughlin, both landing heavily. It was give and take even to the end of round.

Second round: Both men sparring for time, Laughlin backing up, Chips following his man, when Laughlin led, landing on Chips' lip and splitting it up badly. First blood for the sailor. Round ended in light sparring.

Third round: After both men sparring for an opening Laughlin led and missed his mark, falling on deck; was immediately up driving Chips back most to break of poop. The round ended with Chips pretty well winded when time was called, the captain passing a drink to his man, while the sailors rubbed their man down carefully each round with rum and resin.

Fourth round: Both men were well matched. It was a rough and tumble fight, and although Chips was badly winded he fought on to the end of the round when time was called. The mate wanted to make it a draw, but as the men insisted their man had the best of it the fight must go on. Time was called again.

Fifth round: Laughlin led off in this round landing on Chips and giving him his first fall, which was a bad one, but he got up before time was called, rushing at poor Laughlin like a mad bull. Laughlin gave way, and as the captain made his appearance on deck to stop the fight, Chips got an opening and landed on Laughlin, lifting him clean off his feet, and when he landed nearly 20 feet away he lit with his cheek on a beef barrel which was setting at the galley door, splitting his cheek open and so the fight was called a draw, Chips and Laughlin going ashore arm in arm, best of friends ever after, neither the best man. They were a sight, Nat Laughlin with his split cheek, and Chips with his split lip, and oh! Boy, what a fight—between two of the best men I have ever seen stripped; and I have seen a lot of boxing since I gave up the sea, but nothing like this, on a ship's deck, no money in it and free for the audience.

MANY years after I had the pleasure of spending an evening at the house of Nat Laughlin in Liverpool. He had married a very nice young lady and settled down to shore life.

During supper we went over old times. I noticed the scar on his cheek and remarked that it still showed up pretty plain. I noticed him winking at me, but did not know I was treading on dangerous ground until his dear little wife spoke up and said: "Just think of it! That mark nearly killed him. It was a topsail halliard block fell on him, but I don't mind the scar as long as his life was saved." I replied, "Yes, Nat, it come very near fixing you."

NOW in closing I might say I call the character *Donald McDonald* a duplicate of Nat Laughlin, A. B. on the good ship *Lammergeier*, a real man from his feet up and every inch a sailor.

I would call your character *Handsome Joe Kerrigan* the duplicate of Jack Irwin, the carpenter, on board the *Lammergeier*, also every inch a man and a master of his trade.

I don't know who I could duplicate for *Sheridans* as we had no peacemaker at this show. However, you must remember your story is fiction while mine is a true story to show that many a true story reads like fiction.—CAPTAIN JAMES MOORHEAD.

P.S. I only put five rounds in this fight, as that was as much as I could remember, it happened so long ago, but the sight is as vivid to me today as if it happened yesterday. I know that these two able-bodied men fought that morning from 6 A.M. until after 7 A.M. and no idle time in hugging, etc., at that.—J. M.

CONCERNING his story in this issue Robert J. Pearsall tells us the following about an extremely interesting race of people:

Palo Alto, California.

I really got the idea of this story from my old friend, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under "Conjuring." The account of "Dr. Pepper's ghost," which Hazard mentions, connected itself up with some speculations I once heard in China concerning the bullet-defying powers of the Boxer chiefs—and that, naturally, with Koshinga. "The Test of the Five Arrows" is optically possible—and I'm really inclined to think that it, or some very similar stunt, was part of the Boxer repertoire.

THE scene is again the land of the Lolos, named by Dr. Thorel the "Black Caucasians" of Asia. A certain Chinese map describes them thus: "The Barbarians of Shama, who, at indeterminate periods, cross the Blue River (the Yang-tse-kiang) to kill, pillage, burn and make captives." But they have other qualities than savagery: for instance, they possess a system of writing peculiar to themselves, and numerous books which no one but themselves can decipher. And they are a strong race, who, though surrounded by Chinese for hundreds of years, have managed to preserve complete racial homogeneousness. Their origin is a matter of dispute, but everything about them speaks of the vigor of a young people. Even their system of society is indicative of youth, being the same system that we find among the most powerful races in the beginnings of history. Perhaps these Lolos should be included in any consideration one gives to the future of the East.—ROBERT J. PEARSALL.

MAKE our chain of Camp-Fire stations not only a success but a big success. Add one or more stations to the chain so that eventually a member of Camp-Fire can wander almost anywhere in the world and yet find friendly men with common interests, where those of us who can not wander can meet those who do.

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A station may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a station shall display the regular station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve a sufficiently substantial register book. When there are enough stations to warrant even a small wholesale order this office will furnish the books and signs.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause or complaint from members, a station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A STATION bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above station privileges. (Question of requiring identification-cards or Camp-Fire button to be decided later.) Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members is excellent.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

RECENTLY I frankly admitted a mistake I had made in an illustration used in this department to show the danger and foolishness of our present system of underpaying educational and other brain-work in comparison with manual labor. I am keeping this department, to the utmost of my ability, free from facts that are not facts, just as I am keeping it free from any influence or guidance except my own honest opinions. When I found I had made a mistake, even though only by way of illustration, I was eager to correct it as soon as the machinery of the magazine would permit.

But if I am eager to correct a mistake, I am, on the other hand, entirely without modesty in calling attention to the fact that the main lessons I've been preaching in this department for over a year—and for a year or two more before the department was established as a thing by itself—are now beginning to be *accepted by public opinion*. Naturally I do not mean that my small voice convinced the nation, but I do mean that this department is now being amply proved not the voice of a lonely theorist but a voice that events have proved at least worth a hearing.

THIS is not a personal matter with me. You may consider me conceited or not, as you please. My interest is in getting certain points driven home into as many of the American people as the department can reach and, in order to gain more serious attention, I do not hesitate to point out that time has begun to prove that the department has been fairly clear-sighted, fore-sighted and sound thus far and therefore is deserving of being listened to in the future.

A dozen years ago I was a "theorist," "dreamer" and "idealist"—in other words, a fool. Today the country is being forced into doing what the fool advocated. Just as I used to take the polite sneers without grumbling, so now I do not hesitate to point to the vindication of these "theories," to the fact that, if you will look back over this department, you will find that, step by step, what its very lonely

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voice advocated is being proved not only sound but *necessary*.

The main point of this department from the first has been to make Americans see that our only hope of permanent and sound political and economic welfare, under any "system" you please, is a better grounding of the individual citizen in a real knowledge of real democracy and of his individual obligation in a democracy. In other words, systematic education of the whole people in citizenship and democracy. And if you watch the daily papers you now find plenty of evidence that the country at large is beginning to awake very fully to this need. Even the Government is beginning to take steps.

The point that particularly needs driving home now is that, though after all our stupid indifference and neglect we are now pretty fully awake to the need of Americanizing our foreign-born citizens, we have not yet quite fully seen the crying need of Americanizing *ourselves*.

We *think* we know what Americanism is. We don't. We think we know what democracy is. We don't. We think we know what good citizenship is. We don't. We, the native-born.

WITNESS the American Legion, good luck to it. The Legion's big battle-cry is a splendid one—"One hundred per cent. Americanism." But they don't know what it is. At a big Legion meeting one member finally asked "But what *is* one hundred per cent. Americanism?" *No one could tell him.* Several days were asked for consideration of this unexpected question. But at the end of the several days the only answer the committee could give was that "one hundred per cent. Americanism is something to be determined by each man's conscience." That is a very good answer so far as it goes, but it doesn't get anywhere—the best and most creditable answer that ignorance could give, but nevertheless the answer of ignorance. And the great body of American citizens are no whit less ignorant than the Legion.

WITNESS also our persecution of the "Reds." If you have read this department you know that it has done its best to show the fundamental fallacy of Bolshevism, of extreme Socialism and, most of all, the idiocy of attempting to establish any kind of democratic government by overturning an existing democratic government by force. But we have gone a bit crazy in our belated efforts to stamp out the Red evil. We are ourselves so ignorant of real democracy that we are very often extremely undemocratic in our measures against the Reds.

So long as he does not advocate the overthrow of our governemt by force, a Bolshevist (or any other ist) has a complete and unassailable right to advocate and preach Bolshevism whenever and wherever he pleases. The American Legion and most of the rest of us are inclined to act on the mistaken idea that if a man even expresses belief in any of the Bolshevist doctrines he is to be dragged off a platform, put in jail or sent out of the country. That is because we don't know what democracy is. We forget that the fundamental essential of democracy is freedom to express free opinion freely.

IN THE next issue this department will go more fully into this subject, but the main point now is that the extent of the present Red menace in this country is due, not to the Reds, but to *ourselves*. They preach their doctrines to a people who have had no other fundamental doctrines preached to them, who have not had democracy taught or explained to them, have only the vaguest notion of its real meaning and are therefore neither fortified against the new doctrine nor able to detect its fallacies.

Even when the danger breaks upon us our stupid idea of a remedy is to use an ax. An ax is very necessary against some manifestations of Red activity. Perhaps, though, things would not have come to a stage where the ax was necessary if we had in these past years better entrenched ourselves in a real knowledge of real democracy. Certainly, ax or no ax, the only course that is sufficiently fundamental and permanent to ensure us fully against the Red menace is to provide for the systematic education of *ourselves* in real democracy and real citizenship.

AMERICANIZE the foreign-born by all means. But let us Americanize ourselves first. That will make the other task vastly easier. At present we don't even know very clearly what "Americanize" means. Nor what democracy means. It does *not* mean blind intolerance. Nor ignorance.—A. S. H.

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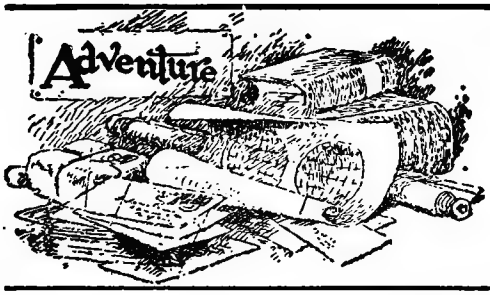

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THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying*.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: First Jan., 1919; Mid-Mar., 1919; First May, 1919; Mid-Sept., 1919, to Mid-Oct., 1919 (inclusive); Mid-Nov., 1919, to first Jan., 1920. Five cents each, not including postage.—Address WILLIAM C. NICE, 432 Bronx Park Ave., New York, N. Y.

WILL SELL: Every issue from Vol. 1, No. 1, to date. Either complete file or separate volumes.—Address H. N. HARSIN, 4726 West End Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTINOS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 714 Crilly Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish: camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. B. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering southeastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries. Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A., University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports, manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shot-Guns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg, Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

Accurate, free information. What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Only *specific* questions answered. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

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The Typical Tropical Tramps

BEST bunch on earth! So speaks Mr. Young of them—and he has been one. Carefree, restless, ever moving on and on through trackless jungle or over far-stretching pampas, working, loafing, tramping, these thousands of Americans form one of the strongest, yet strangest of clans:

Question:—"Who, what, and why are the 'Typical Tropical Tramps' you so often refer to? I noticed them mentioned, especially in your wonderful monograph, 'Tropical Prospecting,' which appeared in 'Ask Adventure' in the mid-July issue."—V. SHEPHERD, Toronto, Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Young: Just when the expression Typical Tropical Tramp originated would be hard to say. My knowledge of the American tropics extends back some 14 years, when, as a young lad, I first crossed over into old Mexico, and the expression was current at that time. Men in the tropics (Americans) used the initials T. T. T. in speaking of certain types of men and only used the words Typical Tropical Tramp to explain to a newcomer when he asked what "T. T. T." meant.

Possibly the expression could not be traced back to its origin, as is the case with the word "boomer" for itinerant railroader, which is in current use throughout the West, and has been for twenty years. Last Winter a T. T. T. whom I knew in Mexico, Ecuador, Panama and Costa Rica, called on me and we were talking about the origin of the expression. He is much older than I and was in Guatemala during the construction of the Northern Railroad from Puerto Barrios to the capital. According to his explanation, Ed Burke tried to organize the roaming Americans and English-speaking foreigners who traveled from job to job into a society for mutual aid. This society was called the "Typical Tropical Tramps." A lot of secret works were drawn up and a badge bearing the letters T. T. T. ordered from the U. S. Later, in a conversation with a man who was in Costa Rica in 1872, and who has a couple of immense albums of photos taken at that time, he told me that the expression was in use when he first landed in Costa Rica.

Both stories are possibly true. Burke may have used the existing expression to draw up the society. Whether it is a fact or not that hundreds of men have been called T. T. T's before this time or not, it is true that hundreds have since been called that afterwards, without having gone through any initiation ceremony. Strange as it may appear, it is a complimentary title. It means that a man is an all-around good fellow who has traveled over the tropics from end to end and will share his last cent with any white man he meets up with down there.

About the first question a T. T. T. asks a man when he arrives is, "How're you fixed?" On receiving an answer that the newcomer hasn't eaten lately, or is short of money, the T. T. T. proceeds to shell out part or all of his roll, his pie card, digs out his best suit and gives it up or borrows one that will fit the newcomer, shares his room, introduces the *recien llegado* (newly arrived) to the bunch, vouches for him to the boss if he wants a job, and if he don't want one and wants to travel to the next camp where white men work squares him with a railroad conductor or buys him a ticket. He may have never seen the man before in his life and may never see him again. He does not expect a cent in return. He figures by the "endless chain" that some one will do the same for him some time, and the chances are a 100 to 1 that the man he has helped will get the opportunity to return the favor at some future time.

It is unbelievable that such men exist in this selfish world. They exist by the hundreds and it is only a case of going to any white camp in Central America, Mexico, and the northern part of South America and down the west coast into the copper and gold camps of Peru and Chile, to find them. They are not very frequent on the east coast of South America after passing Venezuela, and, although a rare T. T. T. is to be found in Brazil and Argentine, the expression is not often heard. Many of them were up the Amazon during the construction of the Madeira-Mamoro, when wages were $250, and room, per month for either a locomotive engineer, or a clerk in the office. The bunch who went were lured by the high prices paid in all lines and the adventure a job of this kind offered. This was a very unhealthy place. Many died with fever and beri-beri in 1909 and 1910, among them Ed Burke, who was acting as chief dispatcher at the time.

Now it happens that a white man loses caste if he labors in a low capacity in Latin-America. He is always employed as a boss of some kind. If he is employed as a machinist he is given a couple of yellow Indian or black West Indians, helpers, and he is supposed to oversee them and make them do the work. Anything that can be done by these cheaper laborers is done in this manner. A man does not lose caste for doing work they can not learn to do, such as running a locomotive or similar work, but he is not supposed to do work they can do. This may appear foolish but it is very sensible.

Long before the war a white American would not consider less than $125 and free quarters. He was a high-priced man. If this man did the work of a 25 cents per day native he was appearing at a disadvantage on the job. He lost the respect of his fellows and also, strange to say, the respect of the native people. In connection with this it is well to state that the better class in Latin-America of the native people never work with their hands. They produce some fine artists, great writers, excellent politicians, many army officers, a multitude of inspired poets (no jest this), but produce no mechanical geniuses, factory managers, or other practical men. The entire bunch of Latin-American countries are forced to call in foreigners to run their machinery, railroads, factories, etc.

In Brazil a man capable of installing a small briquetting plant, cotton mill, or similar work, is known by the title of "DOCTOR." The Brazilian thinks a man capable of doing things of this kind is wonderful. He is introduced into the clubs and complimented in the daily papers. Among all the foreigners who come to Brazil, an American is the most popular. Just to let it be known that a man is an American means to a Brazilian that they have a man capable of doing everything. They themselves are wonderful in their own lines. They can tell more about coffee in one minute by pouring a teaspoonful of it on a saucer and watching the stain it makes than any American can find out in a lifetime. They know rubber through all its grades.

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They know many other things. But a Brazilian couldn't begin to put a ribbon on a typewriter.

To a less extent this holds good through all the countries from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn. Mexico is possibly the exception. Many Mexican firemen have become engineers and many braqueros have become conductors, also others have learned until Mexico can almost do her own work. But these have been peons who have learned. The higher caste have never tried to learn manual work of any kind and look down on a man who does it.

Gradually an American begins to shun working with his hands if he has begun it when he first arrived. He figures he is as good as the better class of native people. Finally he decides he is a —— sight better than the better class and is really reckoned by them as such. It is possibly for this reason that he feels called on to help any fellow countryman who arrives broke. No, I won't say that either. It isn't that. It's just good fellowship. It's a sort of ethics that has been assumed by T. T. T's. It's the custom. Everybody does it and a man falls into the habit, I guess.

I arrived over the trail from Mexico in Guatemala City a pretty hard-looking specimen. That night a man called me aside and gave me $25. His name was Shaunessy and he had arrived over the same trail a few months before. The master mechanic gave me $60 a few nights later. He wanted to give me all he had and we compromised on the $60. Ed Burke wired me $25. I went to Panama and got a chance to stake two of them in return. I hired a hack and took the best meal down to the quarantine station in Colon that ever went in the gate.

Shaunessy did not arrive. He died on the trail between Guatemala and Honduras. If he had arrived in Panama I would have gone broke on him for he was a good guy. That's the way it goes. They stake you and you stake them, or some one else, and he stakes them "further down the creek," as the expression goes.

Most of them are high-class men. They run from men who have managed railroads down to clerks and telegraph operators. Their feet are itchy. As a rule, they do not remain very long. But they are competent and can handle the job while they do work. Ed Burke, who has been general manager of every railroad in Central America, used to blow up, hit the trail several hundred miles, and blow in, looking like a vagabond, on the next job. He was a wonderful man in more respects than one who could possibly be called the "King of the T. T. T's."

Flood was another big man of the clan. A man gave him $12 when he passed through Tehuantepec, walking to the Zone. I personally know that it cost him over $2,500 to buy this same man out of jail in Panama for accidentally murdering a gambler with a tap on the temple. The gambler had a "paper," or rotten skull.

About all that is required to be a T. T. T. is to hit a few trails and arrive at some mine or railroad job broke. They will see that you are looked after. And then you will be doing the same thing yourself. If you don't help the one who helped you, you will help some one "further down the creek" and it will finally get back to him. Law of compensation. Some one started doing it years ago. I wish I knew who he was. I'd get the T. T. T's to build him a monument.

Incidentally, some of the men who first come down "contract stiffs" speak sneeringly of the T. T. T. Many of them later hit the trail and become among the best of the "Typical Tropical Tramps." Here's to 'em! Best bunch in the world!

Back to the Soil

IN EVER increasing numbers city-dwellers are turning their eyes toward the open places of America, where health and a home are theirs for the asking, provided they are willing to work with determination. But it is fatal to pack up and start blindfolded. Here are some facts for the would-be homesteader to digest:

Question:—"Can you give me some information on settling in British Columbia?

My age is 31. Wife and baby fit and healthy. Is it possible for us to settle and make a living, get some land and make enough money for clothes and the necessities? Altho I have never lived in the open, I am a keen hunter and a good shot with the rifle, revolver and shot-gun, and can make or build anything with hammer and saw.

Have not much money to start and do not know how much it would take. The whole idea is to be able to settle in good country somewhere near a lake and be able to live in a good log house and just grow enough garden truck for our own needs, and shoot and fish and generally live in the open, not with the idea of making money but just a living away from the city life and all its worries, in fact back to nature.

Please tell me where to apply for land, what part to go to, how much money you think needed, what equipment to take, best time of year to start, and what to plant and what stock needed.

Can I cut lumber to build house?

Can I buy land with timber, on time?"—H. W. SMITH, Moose Jaw, Sask., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—When you tell me that you are handy with tools you answer your own question with regard to your possibilities in a new country. The shooting part is secondary although it will often come in handy when something good to eat is either running or flying past. I would not say however that I know of any place where you could have just a garden patch and draw the rest of your requirements solely from nature, especially when you have dependents. On the other hand, if you are adaptable and willing to turn your hand to whatever comes up in the line of labor for your neighbors, or whoever requires your services, there is no doubt that you could make it stick.

In the Fort Fraser district there are all the lakes a man could wish for, a fine climate, fair hunting, splendid fishing and a future as a fruit country as well as a mixed farming proposition second to none. Here you would also be able to obtain employment at road building and other work that would help out the grub stake in the event of necessity. This is the place I would recommend to a man in your position.

Now as to capital—well, this is a delicate subject, since men differ so greatly in disposition and ability to provide for possibilities. But I would say that

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the closer you can come to a thousand dollars the better your chances of comparative comfort from the start would be. A bachelor could do it with half this amount, but for you to attempt it would be to take chances.

I am sending you a copy of the land laws together with other information regarding the district referred to, but before coming to a definite decision you should write the Industrial Department, Grand Trunk Pacific Ry., Winnipeg, Can., and get information on labor conditions as well as other suggestions.

Early in the Spring is the best time to go in as this gives you a chance to get a little patch cleared and a garden started. Of course if your capital will stand the strain you might start any time and get a house built, but in that case you would have to take some one else's opinion as to the land you were staking, which is seldom if ever satisfactory.

As to what to plant, get in touch with your neighbors and learn what will be best suited to that territory and also consider your own needs. By this means you should be able to form a pretty good idea of what would be best, but use your own head.

There is plenty of timber for building, fencing and fuel. In fact you may have to cut trees off your garden spot before you can plant a spud. Drop the idea of taking up a timber limit. That is not a poor man's proposition, as you will learn when you get there.

As to stock, you will want one horse, a team if you can afford it, with some sort of a vehicle for transportation. A cow is a necessity, and all the hens you can shelter. Pigs are good, as they can be salted and will rustle a great deal of their own feed. Sheep, no. They lose their wool in the underbrush and are only good for coyote bait; in fact are too expensive even for that.

Frankly, I believe the best thing for you to do is to go there, get a job with some settler who has need of help and spend a year in soaking up all the information you can get. It will save you both money and misery in the future.

Indian Runners

IS THERE a human being who can run eighty miles a day and put in a fair amount of work during the same twenty-four hours? Well, we give the evidence at hand. Perhaps some of you who have lived in the Southwest can add to it:

Question:—"I read a story in an issue of your publication some time ago, and also in reference to this story an article, in your editorial pages, which had to do with the endurance and running abilities of the Apache or Pueblo Indians, of New Mexico and Arizona. If I remember aright the article stated that these Indians had been known to arise in the morning, run as many as forty miles to their fields, and cover the same distance at night.

I am writing to you to try and obtain proof of this.

I am billeted with a bunch of skeptical fellows who think this the height of exaggeration and nothing will do but I must show written proof.

If there is any possible way to get this information, I would greatly appreciate it."—JAMES E. BLACK, Mauvages, France.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Cushing, the man who blew up the *Albemarle* with a spar-bomb during the Civil War, went West and lived with these Pueblo Indians for years, to learn as much of them as possible. George Wharton James lived with them to study them. Charles F. Lummis lived with them because he liked them and could make some money by writing them up.

All three bear the same testimony, telling of just such exhibitions of endurance as you mention coming under their personal observation. George Wharton James I have known slightly for twenty-five years. Lummis I have known longer than that. Cushing was unknown to me, but enjoyed an excellent reputation. There is no known reason for disputing any of them, since men of the West who have not enjoyed the effulgence of the lime-light have long said the same things and I would stake my last bean on the average Western adventurer who dares strange things.

Lummis and James and Cushing all tell of the wand race, where twenty young men on each side run thirty miles, kicking a peeled willow wand ahead of them which must not be touched save with the foot.

The Cook Islands

A REMARKABLE and ever-increasing interest in the South Seas is being shown by Americans. Our expert on those far lands gives a detailed account which will be of interest to home seekers:

Question:—

1. "What is the average price per acre in the Cook Islands?
2. What is grown there for export?
3. What are the native exports?
4. What is imported there?
5. Which is the chief town, or village?
6. Is there food grazing for cows or goats?
7. Are the islands visited by any locusts, or other insect pests?
8. Do bananas grow to perfection with cultivation?
9. What is the staple food for the natives?
10. Is mosquito netting necessary both day and night?
11. Are there any schools there? If so would an American teacher be eligible?
12. Is the flora and fauna varied and plentiful?
13. Could a man with a few hundred dollars obtain an existence—food, shelter and clothing—by being willing to work a few hours daily?
14. Is it advisable to procure suitable wearing apparel here?
15. I have read 'In the Strange South Seas' by B. Grimshaw. Is she good authority?"—FRANK BOX, San Francisco, Cal.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:

1. It is becoming more and more difficult to lease land on Rarotonga, the chief island of the eight which compose the Cook group. Every acre belongs to the natives, and the leasing is done through the native land court. Rarotonga is not cultivated to the extent it should be. It is highly reproductive, but, as the sites vary, I can not give you an idea of the price per acre to lease.

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2. Bananas, lemons, oranges, pineapples, tomatoes, coconuts—with the nut commercialized into copra.

3. Besides the above, raw coffee and limejuice.

4. Practically all the leading lines that Europeans would import—boots, clothing, bicycles, motor cars (the natives are quite up to date, with numerous cars, due to prosperity and good roads), canned goods, ironmongery, tea, tobacco, etc.

5. Avarua, on the north coast, is the principal village of Rarotonga, and the seat of government.

6. These islands are not strong on grazing, and milk-yielding animals are rare.

7. Not the locust, but the islands have their own peculiar pests, notably the everpresent ant. The New Zealand Government has sent experts to the group, and they are successfully fighting pests.

8. The banana is not indigenous, but it is made perfect by cultivation, and is prolific everywhere.

9. The Maoris of the Cook group eat not only what nature has provided with such lavish hand in the way of coconuts, breadfruit, taro, oranges, etc., but they vary the aboriginal fare from the fleshpots of civilization.

10. Every precaution is taken to keep the mosquito and the ant and other bugs out of the living-room.

11. Rarotonga and the other Cook Islands are right up to date with schools, for Christianity was introduced in 1821, and the London Missionary Society established schools as part of its policy. Latterly the Education Dept. of New Zealand has reorganized the school system and today has quite a number of modern-style schools in the islands, with European teachers. There would certainly be a job there for a relieving teacher.

12. The flora would open the eyes of the most enthusiastic botanist with sheer delight. The fauna is remarkable for its absence.

13. A man with a few hundred dollars could not do better than exist in one of the loveliest spots on earth if he was willing to do more than eking out existence. The white settlers do not admit possible loafers.

14. You can get all the suitable clothes and everything else necessary on Rarotonga. Take what light white clothes you happen to have.

15. Beatrice Grimshaw is one of the best modern authorities on the South Sea Islands, for she has traveled extensively through them and is a trained English journalist, which means that she has powers of observation. Besides her travelogues, she gets a good deal of fact into her fiction.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

PHILLIPSON, DAVID, of Hamilton or Montreal. Relatives of, please write to his son, ROBERT PHILLIPSON, Jersey Parade Murrumbuna, Victoria, Australia.

J. L. Come home or write. Last heard of in Buffalo on way to Canada. Everything O.K. Write to mother.—Address MARY E. O'BRIEN, L. T. No. 388, care of *Adventure.*

WHARTON, BOB. Have been out of Army since last June. Write to old address and write me.—W. A. GLICK, care of General Delivery, Marysville, Ohio.

STEVENS, CHARLES. "FAT," of Indianapolis, Ind. Was with me in Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, from January, 1912, to December 19, 1915. Please write.—Address HARRY KOLSTAD, 1540 Bailey St., Buffalo, N. Y.

ENQUIST, CLARENCE, of Rockford, Ill. The chief gravy-hound wants to hear from you. Last heard from you when you were drafted. Please write.—Address HARRY KOLSTAD, 1540 Bailey St., Buffalo, N. Y.

MARTEL, LEON H. Left home five years ago. Was living in Pennsylvania last December. Everything is O.K. at home. Shall be glad to see you. Please write to CHARLES A. TYLER, 984 Main St., Worcester, Mass., or MRS. FLORENCE L. MARTEL, 1 Salem Sq., Worcester, Mass.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SMOLINSKY, LOUIS. Age twenty-four. Last heard from in 1914 when he was at the Seamen's Institute, Liverpool, England. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. M. SMOLINSKY, 392 Watkins St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

SKINNER, WM. B. Age sixty-four, pug nose, light hair, one finger partly off. Last heard from at Woodland, Cal. Usually works for cattlemen. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. S. STEINER, Box 156, Townsend, Mont.

STOUT, CAPT. A. T. In the Separate Field Artillery Battalion, U. S. Marines, in March, 1919. Please write your old pal.—Address THOMAS P. JORDAN, 134 West 34th St., New York, N. Y.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ZELLAR, LIEUT. C. A. In the Separate Field Artillery Battalion, U. S. Marines, in March, 1919. Write your old pal.—Address THOMAS P. JORDAN, 134 West 34th St., New York N. Y.

CARROLL, SGT. MARTIN. In Separate Field Artillery Battalion, U. S. Marines, in March, 1919. Please write your old pal.—Address THOMAS P. JORDAN, 134 West 34th St., New York, N. Y.

BOARDERS, SGT. In Separate Field Artillery Battalion, U. S. Marines, in March, 1919. Please write your old pal.—Address THOMAS P. JORDAN, 134 West 34th St., New York, N. Y.

SHIPMATES. Will be glad to hear from those who served in the A. G. of S.S. *Evelyn*, H.M.S. *Flagler* and *El Oriente*, and men that put the five divisions in comm. of the U.S.S. *Texas.*—Address B. E. LAND, 742 Lee St., Dunville, Va.

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AMERICAN LEGION. Members of the 213th Batt., C.E.F., write to me. Have something for you. Lamson, Stone, VanValkenburg, "New Mexico Slim" where are you? Address—"PEE WEE" PHILLIPS, L. T. No. 387, care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MERCER, HOMER J. Also called "Frenchy." Twenty-eight years of age, weighs about 150 pounds, has light brown eyes, black hair, and scar on breast. Tool-maker and machinist. May be in Montreal, Canada. Any person knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address MRS. HOMER MERCER, 232 Penn Ave. W., Warren, Pa.

THOMPSON, SYDNEY A. Was at Central Providencia, Ratillas, Porto Rico, during 1913-1914 and part of 1915. When last heard from was in Spain trying to make his way to Liverpool, England, just before the war broke out. Write your old friend.—Address H. H. HAYNES, 2023 E. Dauphin St., Philadelphia, Pa.

JONES, EDWARD H. Brother. Last heard of in 1910, when I lived in Remsen, New York, with his mother and father. He left home saying he was going to work in Lockport, N. Y., and intending later to leave for Buffalo, N. Y., where he was to work in the offices of Swift & Co. He is about thirty-four years of age. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write his sister.—Address MRS. ALMA EVANS GRAY, 489 Clay St., Portland, Oregon.

PAGE, ARTHUR A. Father. Born in Staffordshire, England, about 1854. Came to Canada and married Miss Sarah Page at Toronto, Ont., Canada in 1883. Worked as a piano salesman thirteen years for J. O. Twitchell, Chicago, Ill. Also president of Sons of St. George Lodge, Primrose No. 145, Chicago, Ill. Last heard from at Windsor, Ont., Canada, on way home in 1901. Probably in Quebec or Montreal. Was also singer and entertainer. Any information concerning him will be appreciated.— Address MRS. SARAH A. PAGE, 3020 India St., San Diego, Cal.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-February or First March issues of Adventure. They can get name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ADAMS, NEWBURN: Bennett, Joseph: Berrigan, Edward: Campbell, Duncan,: Chandler, Frank Charley: Chapman, Charles; Clark, Charley; Cohen, Jacob; Danch, Mrs. Mary; Davis, Fredie; Davis, Jack; Denning, Leslie G.; Denning, W. Charles Myson; D. I. K.; Falusi, Joseph; Farren, Harry F.; Greeves, J. Gardner; Henderson, John; Hornstein, Samuel; Jennings, Floyd; Kilgore, Y. J.; Kruger, Henry; Kyle, Wesley; Lamie, James; LaPierre, James; McLean, Geo. or Jas.; McGuire, Amos and Willis; Morse, Raymond; Morrison, John D.; Nulph, Stewart; Orman; Parker, John R.; Ramey, Dewey; Rozenthal, "Slim"; Sheldon, Willis D.; Spalding, Joseph Warren; Vail, John M.; Wagner, Gus; Wolverton, Earl.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

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THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST APRIL ISSUE

Seven blazes along the trail ahead are indicated below; two others, which you can't afford to miss, are pointed out on page two of this issue.

THE SPECK IN THE APPLE — *By G. A. Wells*

Remembering that he has a wife and children dependent on him, Policeman *John Mason* runs away from danger, but soon discovers that his thoughtfulness is not appreciated.

SUCH BLUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF — *By R. T. M. Scott*

One day out from Bombay on the little steamer *Baluchistan*, and a raja's store of pearls is stolen. Then *Bat Smith*, whose business is "dreams and crocodiles," sets his wits to work at unraveling the mystery.

TEN THOUSAND *HECTÁREAS* — *By Farnham Bishop*

Barstow starts his expedition to the San Blas country of Panama with the intention of driving the Indians off his rubber concession. Then he meets *Enrique Arcilla*—"*Henry Clay*"—and his resultant experience is an eye-opener.

THE WILL TO GO ON — *By Clyde B. Hough*

A man alone in a desert of snow—alone with a wolf and the death that hovers in the icy air. A three-cornered battle.—Who wins?

WILD BLOOD Part II — *By Gordon Young*

As the *Sally Martin* plows the Pacific on her way to the island of *Graname* the pearler, the black-bearded Englishman, *Davenant*, continues his plotting against *Hurricane Williams*, but from another angle. Then comes the tornado, leaving a new factor in its wake.

PASSENGER BY FREIGHT — *By Carl Clausen*

When *Marion Travis* tells her father that she has married one of his sea-captains, he fires his new son-in-law by wire. En route home to San Francisco, *Captain Lingle* falls into an adventure at sea which evens the score and then some.

MERCENARY AMBITIONS — *By James Ellsworth Noel*

It's a bitter lesson to old *Pete*, is the loss of the money that was to have bought him a ranch, but since it teaches him not to sit in at poker his wife considers it worth the price. And so when he has a chance later to realize an ambition, he knows enough not to be mercenary.

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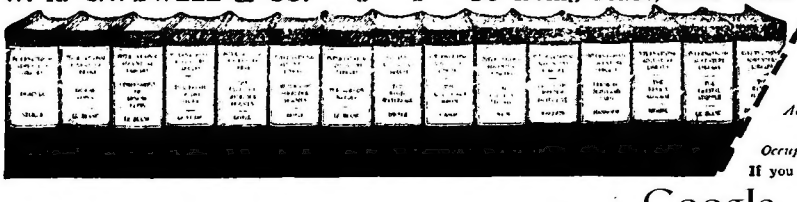

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